



THE INDEPENDENT

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Every leader's waking nightmare

The MPs who cannot keep quiet

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Major tried to sink Irish peace

Letters show Dublin initiative was rejected

DAVID MCNITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

John Major repeatedly attempted to persuade the Irish government to abandon the peace initiative which led to the Downing Street declaration of 1993 and the following year's IRA ceasefire.

Confidential letters show the Prime Minister did not believe the Irish government's argument that the historic declaration would lead to a cessation of IRA violence. It also reveals the IRA and Sinn Féin played a significant role in writing the early drafts of the declaration.

The evidence undermines the conventional view in Britain that the Downing Street declaration, and the August 1994 IRA ceasefire, were the direct result of Mr Major's efforts. On the contrary, the material shows the Prime Minister opposed the thrust of the initiative, and moved only with reluctance.

It indicates Mr Major signed the declaration only after intense pressure from the then Irish Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, and the SDLP leader, John Hume.

The research shows how the IRA and Sinn Féin had direct input into early drafts of the declaration, with Sinn Féin writing several drafts and passing them on at secret meetings with British government representatives.

The new material is presented in a book, *The Fight for Peace*, published yesterday, and in a Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme to be broadcast tonight.

It includes the text of highly confidential private letters be-

tween Mr Major and Mr Reynolds during the Anglo-Irish negotiations which led to the emergence of the Downing Street declaration in December 1993. Mr Reynolds sent a draft declaration to Mr Major, writing in a personal note: "It has the backing, so far as we can ascertain through our intermediaries, of those who can produce peace. There are risks, but peace is within our reach if we play our cards right."

Mr Major, however, after consulting the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, and the intelligence agencies, concluded the initiative stood no chance of producing an IRA cessation of violence. Sir Patrick favoured seeking an agreement with the constitutional parties, to the exclusion of Sinn Féin.

In personal letters to Mr Reynolds, Mr Major argued: "There is clearly no hope of securing even tacit acceptance by the Unionist ministers of a joint declaration along the lines of your draft." He added: "After giving it very careful con-

sideration, with all the intelligence at our disposal, we have very reluctantly concluded that it will not run at the present time."

Mr Major subsequently changed his mind, after intense pressure and following the eruption of violence in late 1993.

The material shows the path to the Downing Street declaration began two years before it was signed, when Mr Hume wrote a first draft of the document. The book gives the text of 11 drafts circulated within a circle that included Mr Hume, Mr Reynolds, Sinn Féin's president, Gerry Adams, and the army council of the IRA.

The last of these drafts was passed on to Mr Major by Mr Reynolds in June 1993. The British and Irish governments later negotiated at least 15 further drafts. The revelations follow the weekend disclosure that the Government's secret contacts with the IRA and Sinn Féin were set in motion as early as 1990.

Timetable to peace

- 1990: Peter Brooke, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, sanctions secret contacts with Sinn Féin and IRA.
- 1991: John Hume writes first draft of what will become the Downing Street declaration.
- June 1993: The Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, sends 11th draft of declaration to Major.
- Oct./Nov 1993: Major rejects draft. Ten die in IRA bombing on Shankill Road; 8 die in loyalist gun attack on pub in Greysteel; contacts between London and IRA end.
- Dec 1993: Major accepts declaration.
- Aug 1994: IRA announces cessation of violence.
- Spring 1995: Government contacts with IRA resume.
- Feb 1996: IRA ceasefire ends; Docklands bomb

Chernobyl blaze rekindles memories of disaster



A woman walks as fire engulfs her former home in the exclusion zone around the Chernobyl plant, scene of the world's worst nuclear accident almost exactly 10 years ago. The fire destroyed five deserted villages but was put out before radioactivity could spread. Photograph: Reuters

PM threatens go-slow on Europe

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major today will open up a new front in the battle over the European single market by threatening other EU states that he will go slow on new agreements unless they adhere to Britain's opt-out from the social chapter.

It follows the inconclusive talks yesterday between the Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg and the European Commission, Franz Fischler, over easing the European beef ban.

Mr Major's speech in London today to the Institute of Directors may be seen as an attempt to restore some of the Government's credibility among its Euro-sceptic MPs after being forced to retreat in its war of words over the beef ban.

The Prime Minister will attack Britain's European partners for using health and safety legislation, over which Britain has no veto, to challenge Britain's social chapter opt-out negotiated at Maastricht. "If old agreements are to be broken, I cannot see how we can be expected to make new ones," Mr Major will say. It is intended as a clear warning that Britain will not agree to progress in the Inter-Governmental Conference, unless the Commission stops bending the rules on issues such as a statutory 48-hour working week.

His criticism will target a sore point among many Tory MPs, and it will enable Mr Major to counter-attack Labour for being prepared to sign up to the social chapter. The Euro-sceptics made a show of strength in the Commons when 66 Tory MPs voted

for an end to the power of the European Court of Justice over British courts. The vote on a backbench bill was intended to show the Government there is growing support among Tory backbenchers for a commitment to renegotiate the Treaty of Rome.

Ian Duncan-Smith, who introduced the bill, said at least 30 ministerial aides supported the move, but were stopped from voting for it by pressure from the Government whips. Hope of end to ban, page 2

IN BRIEF

Yeltsin's arch-enemy reported killed

Russia was last night anxiously awaiting further details about a report that the Chechen rebel leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev (below), President Boris Yeltsin's arch-enemy, had been killed. The former Soviet air force general was said to have died



after being caught in an air strike while he was in a field outside a Chechen village, using his satellite telephone to discuss possible peace talks. Page 11

UN accuses Israel over rocket attacks

The UN commander in southern Lebanon accused his Israeli counterpart of trying to justify further Qana-style tragedies, where 120 Lebanese refugees died last Thursday, by claiming that Hizbollah is still using UN bases for cover to fire Katyusha rockets into Galilee. Page 10

Today's weather

Bright and cool, with sun and showers. Section Two, page 29



CS gas squirted at handcuffed man

JASON BENNETTO,
Crime Correspondent

A man who died in police custody after CS spray was squirted into his face had his arms handcuffed behind his back at the time, the *Independent* has learned.

It is also understood that at least five officers were attempting to restrain Ibrahim Sey, 29, at a police station in east London in March, when he was sprayed with the incapacitant.

News that CS was used while a man was handcuffed brought calls for trials of the spray, which is being tested by 16 police forces in England and Wales, to be halted immediately.

Ghanaian-born Mr Sey, who suffered from mental problems, was arrested after a fracas involving his wife and two children. Initial findings of the police inquiry into the death at Ilford police station, in east London, are understood to have found

that Mr Sey was handcuffed at the time he was sprayed, and was struggling, but contrary to some reports he was not head butting officers. Sources suggest that shortly before the struggle he attempted to kiss a woman police officer.

A friend of Mr Sey, Pasobu Ndimbalan, who had travelled with him to the station in a police van, has claimed that up to 12 officers were involved in his arrest and restraining him at the police station.

Tony Banks, Labour MP for Newham North West, said yesterday: "If he was restrained already with handcuffs to use CS spray is dangerous and reckless - it must be outside the permitted rules and guidelines."

"The CS sprays should be withdrawn immediately from service until this matter is resolved."

CS spray, which causes breathing difficulties, streaming eyes and nose, is designed to be

used defensively to restrain violent people.

A post-mortem examination showed that Mr Sey, who was 6ft 3 and weighed 18 stones, collapsed after a period of exertion and was suffering from hypertensive heart disease. Death was not a result of being sprayed, however further toxicology tests are being carried out on his brain to see whether it was a contributing factor.

Police from Forest Gate station in east London were called to Mr Sey's home in Forest Gate at 4.24am on 16 March, where they found his wife standing in the road. She had jumped from their first floor flat. Mr Sey was allegedly holding his six-month-old baby and shouting through an open window.

Mr Ndimbalan eventually persuaded Mr Sey to get into the back of a police van with him. When they arrived at the police yard of Ilford station the two men were separated.



Ibrahim Sey: 'Sprayed while he was handcuffed'

A scuffle took place in which Mr Sey was handcuffed. Shortly afterwards he was sprayed in the face, during which several people suffered from the effects of the incapacitant and were replaced by other officers.

Mr Sey was placed in a cell and subsequently complained

of feeling unwell. He was taken to hospital where he later died.

An inquiry is being led by Frank Wilkinson, Assistant Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Police, and the case is being overseen by the Independent Police Complaints Authority.

The Newham Monitoring Project, a campaign group, is calling for a halt to the CS trial and for the officers involved to be suspended while an independent inquiry is set up. Project spokesman Piara Powar said: "When CS spray first came out it was said it was for use on dangerous criminals, not for people handcuffed inside a police station."

Lee Jasper, for the National Black Caucus, added: "How can it possibly be justified to use CS spray on a suspect who is handcuffed and surrounded by officers in the confines of a police station?"

Disruptive boy allowed back into school

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

A compromise deal was drawn up yesterday to allow a disruptive schoolboy back into the Nottingham school from which he was expelled. Teachers at Glaisdale School, Nottingham, have voted to let the 13-year-old boy back into mainstream classes.

The headteacher, David Higgins, will today urge teaching staff at the school to accept an agreement that the boy should stay

at the school - but with more specialist support. Teachers' representatives are still considering a strike from Friday.

Richard was expelled from the school after a history of violent incidents. Since the beginning of term, he has been taught on his own by the school's head and one other teacher. His parents appealed against his expulsion to a local authority panel, who ordered that he should be returned to the school.

That prompted a strike vote by 20 members of the Nation-

al Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers at Glaisdale School.

They claimed that the boy was unteachable, a threat to them and to other pupils. But the appeals panel decision has legal status.

Yesterday, after a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with the boy's parents and the headteacher, local authority representatives said that they had reached an agreement.

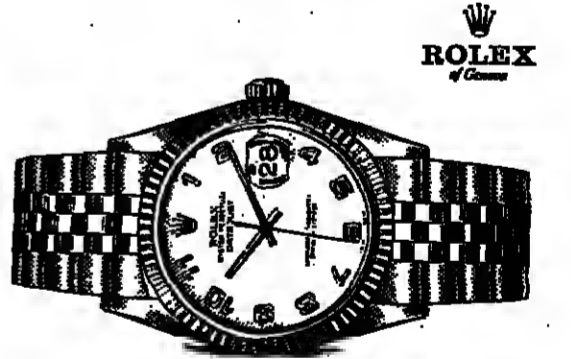
In an agreed joint statement between the parties Mr and Mrs Wilding's solicitor, Hilary Free-

man, said: "Following a very constructive meeting between Mr and Mrs Wilding, Mr Higgins, the headteacher, and officers of the education committee, agreement has been reached for Richard's future education to take place partly at Glaisdale School, which will eventually lead to reintegration into classes at Glaisdale."

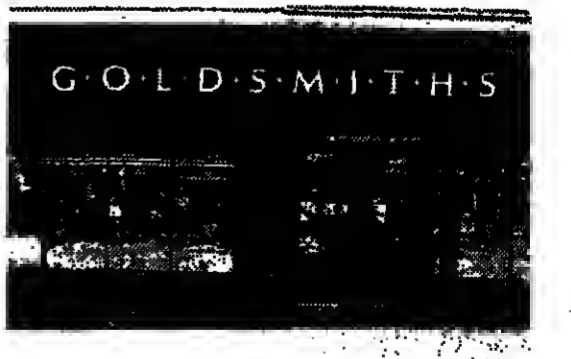
An education authority spokesman said that the special arrangements would not involve the boy being taught by any of its existing teachers, or in a mainstream class.

The general secretary of the NASUWT, Nigel de Gruchy, said that was bound to give his members "cause for concern". But he was unwilling to be drawn on the prospects for strike action going ahead before talking in detail to both the local authority and his own local officers.

"We have to study this in detail. At the moment it's not very promising. But we obviously have to talk to the local authority," Mr de Gruchy said. Leading article, page 16 School dispute, page 5



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news

Just like old times as Smilealot slays the Grey Knight

Parliament is, apparently, a wonderful place. "Since the Reform Bill," opined the Euro-sceptic Iain Duncan-Smith (of whom more later), "laws have been made and crafted by Parliament and scrutinised line by line." Note the words: crafted, scrutinised. This is an image of our legislature as a congregation of silversmiths, infinitely patient and careful in their valuable work—a Guild of British Politicians.

If this romantic picture has a historical, slightly mediaeval, resonance, then so too does the reality of political debate in the House. Twice a week mortal combat takes place between the

two nominated champions of the big parties, in front of a partisan crowd. On one side is the young champion, wisps of golden hair protruding from his helm, clad all in silver armour with the favours of thousands of ladies hanging from his lance. His opponent is that grizzled veteran, The Knight of The Rather Doleful Countenance, his breastplate covered in the dents of old conflicts, his back-plate even more hacked about from the blows of colleagues.

The main weapon of both is contempt, which—like the huge longwords of yore—tends to be unwieldy and inaccurate. So on Tuesdays and Thursdays they tot-



DAVID AARONOVITCH

ter under the weight of their blades, circling slowly, hoping to land a blow in the right place. Succeed and they will lop off a limb, cleave a crest or hew a head. Cries of triumph will go up and morale will rise. But usually both retire exhausted at the

end of the contest, with no clear advantage to either side.

Yesterday, however, Smilealot laid out the Grey Knight. Was it possible, he had asked, for the Prime Minister to clarify exactly what dire and dread action—as hinted at by the Foreign Secretary—would be taken by his government should the Europeans not rescind their ban on the Beef of Britain? To counter this line of attack Mr Major held aloft his shield. And on it was written "we shall look at other options". That was a leg gone.

Blair's turn. What exactly were these options? Mr Major jumped to his remaining leg and responded that he (Mr Major) had clearly told him (Mr Blair) already, and was sorry that he hadn't understood. Which was clearly nonsense. So that was an arm off.

Blair delivered the coup de grace, amid a flurry of his favourite epithets ("divided, weak, incompetent" etc). From the pool of political blood in which he was now lying Mr Major croaked something about Labour's tax plans and expired. Blair smiled with relief, but swore that tomorrow (like in the Highlander films) he will have to do it all over again. He knows the whole business is neither pretty nor effective, yet continues to be regarded as a test of courage and

virility.

Far better argument was to be heard immediately afterwards, when the aforementioned Iain Duncan-Smith introduced a bill designed to counter the powers of the European Court of Justice over Britain. It was a 10-minute bill, so called because 10 minutes is allotted to its discussion. Just enough time for one speech in favour and one against.

After the thudding and bashing of PMQs, this was Greek wrestling. Two ciled combatants, their speeches sinuous, clever and, above all, well-argued, twisted around each other. Mr Duncan-Smith's watchmaking Parliament

was being frustrated by a remote bench of foreign judges, Norman Lamont and John Redwood nodded vigorously.

Sounding eerily like James Naughtie of the Today programme, Liberal Democrat Charles Kennedy slid into the ring. Just as Mr Duncan-Smith failed to mention any of the benefits of the European Court, Mr Kennedy sought no faults. The Court prevented abuses by other countries. Full stop.

Ten minutes being up, Mr Kennedy won the vote (just) and Mr Duncan-Smith the argument (just). And all in two-thirds of the time it takes for Prime Minister's questions.

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IN BRIEF

Missing sailor is presumed dead

A lone sailor whose fire damaged yacht was found abandoned and drifting at sea was presumed dead yesterday. Thomas Jardine, 46, from Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, was on the 35ft Rumbumble, built by his wife.

The yacht was found drifting 10 miles south-west of the Lizard, Cornwall, on Monday. There was no one on board and evidence of a cabin fire.

Here for the beer

Britain's first bottled beer museum has opened in Ipswich, Suffolk, with more than 1,800 bottles of commemorative ale. The oldest was brewed in 1902 and the most valuable was made by Jennings of Cockermouth for the coronation in 1953. The bottle of Coronation Ale, now worth up to £100, would have cost around a halfpenny when it was brewed.

Fire peace deal

Firefighters due to vote on industrial action in a long-running dispute over jobs and holidays will instead be balloted on a peace deal after a break-through at conciliation talks. Members of the Fire Brigades Union on Merseyside have staged 22 walkouts in nine months over 20 job losses and a three-day cut in holidays.

Actress's damages

The actress Stefanie Powers accepted a public apology and libel damages of more than £60,000 over allegations that she sexually harassed and assaulted a male assistant. Ms Powers, 52, who starred in the television series *Hart to Hart* in the 1980s, sued the Sun newspaper after it reported allegations that she was an alcoholic and had caused the assistant to be threatened.

MP goes home

The leading Northern Ireland MP Seamus Mallon was discharged from hospital five days after being taken ill during a radio programme. The deputy leader of the SDLP was admitted to St Thomas's Hospital in Westminster, central London, on Thursday. Mr Mallon, 59, became ill while taking part in a radio programme by telephone from his London home.

£100m delivery

The Post Office announced that it is to spend £100m in the next year on new vehicles. Parcelforce managing director Kevin Williams said £9m will be spent on commercial vehicles and £12m on cars, mainly for sales staff, in the next financial year. The Post Office has one of Britain's biggest vehicle fleets, with around 30,000 cars and vans.

Accent on jobs

The supermarket chain Tesco is to create 150 jobs at a national telephone inquiry centre in Dundee. Fifty such call centres have opened in Scotland, employing more than 5,000 people, often by firms whose customers prefer Scottish accents to English regional ones. They include IBM's European help centre in Greenock and BT telemarketing in Motherwell.

Last supper

The monogrammed pewter tankard Charles Dickens is said to have been drinking from when he died at his dinner table on 9 June, 1870, sold for £4,830 at a London auction.

£170m NHS payout to GPs 'was illegal'

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

More than £170m of taxpayers' money has been paid out illegally by the Government to smooth the path of its health service reforms, according to a powerful official watchdog. Detailed records of the scheme are said to have been destroyed.

The Commons Public Accounts Committee has been asked to look into payments by the NHS to GPs to enable them to manage their own budgets. A letter from the National Audit Office, highly critical of the payments, has been passed to Robert Sheldon MP, the committee chairman.

In the letter, the watchdog described the payments as "unsatisfactory" and said public money was "paid out for five years without explicit Parliamentary approval". Advice from solicitors at the Department of Health warning that the scheme was unlawful had been ignored by officials.

Files were destroyed and as a result, says the NAO, "our analysis of what went wrong and why, must be speculative to some extent".

In 1990, the Government's Community Care Act made no mention of payments to GPs and practice managers to cover the cost of hiring accountants and book-keepers to help them move to administering their own finances. Legislation authorising the cash was not passed or approved by Parliament.

Nevertheless, acting on orders from the health department, Family Health Service Authorities went ahead and handed out the money. In October 1992, says the NAO, "solicitors first drew attention to the lack of statutory authority". In another minute, on 7 June 1994, the NAO says the de-

partment's lawyers pointed out that there was no lawful basis for FHSAs to make the payments to GPs.

The legislation was finally introduced last year, but not before payments totalling £159.7m in England, £8.95m in Wales and £9.17m in Scotland, had been made.

The NAO held an internal inquiry after the matter was raised in October 1995 by the Labour MP, Rhodri Morgan.

One of the reasons for the payments being pushed through without MPs being given the opportunity to discuss them, was the desire of civil servants not to delay the Government's health reforms, the NAO found.

"GP fundholding was one of the areas in which innovation and change was most evident and there was an active programme in the department to keep up the momentum, which may have led to work on the statutory approval of management allowance being given less priority than it deserved."

When the NAO came to look at the scheme it found staff had changed jobs and that files had been destroyed under the "five-year rule" covering the keeping of departmental records.

Mr Morgan said it was clear that "if scandals go on for more than five years they will go undetected". He said it was outrageous that it was impossible to discover who had destroyed the files and the MP also questioned the motives for getting rid of them.

It was obvious, said Mr Morgan, that staff were required to be "gun-ho about fund-holding—no body dared raise the issue with ministers because they were afraid of bringing bad news."

He had written to Mr Sheldon asking for a PAC inquiry.

BSE crisis: Hogg talks with Fischler raise hopes of relaxation of European ban



Beef-eaters: Meat-lovers queue as one tonne of prime British entrecôte beef is given away in Westminster

Photograph: Philip Meech

Removal of beef boycott 'closer'

KATHERINE BUTLER
Brussels

Douglas Hogg, the Minister of Agriculture, yesterday held out the hope that Europe's ban on British beef would be relaxed next week.

Mr Hogg met the Franz Fischler, the European farm commissioner, for two-and-a-half hours of talks on a selective slaughter policy and despite the absence of any obvious agreement appeared confident a deal paving the way for a phased removal of the boycott could be closer.

"The Council is likely to move to support a relaxation of the ban against the background

of the steps we have taken," Mr Hogg said after the meeting. He focused on "concepts and principles" rather than numbers to be slaughtered. However, EU sources said Mr Fischler was disappointed that with just five days before the deadline set by EU ministers last month, Britain has still not submitted a comprehensive and politically convincing BSE eradication strategy to the European Commission.

"[Mr Fischler] would like to have seen a bit more" one senior official said. The Commission will have to examine detailed proposals on slaughter and eradication before recommending acceptance by ministers who are due to meet in Luxembourg next Monday, but plans for the slaughter of 42,000 cattle were described as "minimalist" by some officials.

Mr Fischler remained cautious after the meeting saying his concern was less the numbers of animals to be destroyed than a clear strategy for urgently reducing the incidence of BSE in British herds. "As to a specific proposal in writing, we are still waiting for that" he said.

He also stressed that the onus was on Britain to convince its EU partners that controls and curbs are being strictly enforced on the ground. A team of EU inspectors is currently in

the United Kingdom and will be reporting back on its findings by the end of the week.

Despite the obstacles the tone of yesterday's meeting appears to have been more conciliatory, with a determined effort on Mr Hogg's part to lower the temperature. According to one source, Mr Hogg reassured Mr Fischler over reports that Britain might be considering trade reprisals.

The prospect of exemptions from the ban as a possible first step towards normalisation of trade was raised yesterday and Mr Hogg said he wanted to see grass-fed cattle—though least susceptible to infection—exempted from compulsory

slaughter. "We have explored the possibility of devising a system of exemptions to the 30-month rule. There is real merit in that," he added.

However, the Government is unlikely to press to get the ban lifted in Scotland and Northern Ireland even though the Commission has already said it could go along with that approach.

Animal welfare campaigners yesterday pledged to picket abattoirs where thousands of dairy calves, less than 10 days old, will be slaughtered as part of the emergency controls introduced against mad cow disease. The cull is likely to begin tomorrow in 79 approved slaughter houses.

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Hague told to hold full inquiry

ROGER DOBSON

The Secretary of State for Wales, William Hague, was yesterday pressed to hold a full judicial inquiry into widespread child abuse in North Wales which would investigate a number of issues, including allegations of the involvement of former and serving policemen.

The inquiry would also look at the idea of a Children's Ombudsman to listen to young people in care who have complaints of abuse to tackle the problem of such children being reluctant to complain because of fears they will not be believed.

Ways of identifying paedophiles working in social work training would also be part of the brief, according to a six-point proposal put to Mr Hague by Labour MPs yesterday.



Victims of the abusers

After yesterday's meeting, Labour's health spokesman on Wales, Rhodri Morgan, said, "The Welsh Secretary gave us an absolute undertaking that there would be no cover-up." The Welsh Office is also understood to be taking up with other departments the issues surrounding the influence that insurers have on the way child abuse investigations are carried out. There have been complaints that insurers put pressure on councils not to publish because of the potential ammu-

nition it provided for would-be litigants.

The delegation also called for the confidential report of an inquiry team into abuse in Cwmwd to be made public and told the Secretary of State that there was an overwhelming call for a judicial inquiry from almost everyone involved.

The delegation said that a public inquiry should consider: ■ Barring residential care workers from working in homes when there are doubts about their activities; ■ The problem of any paedophiles working in social work training centres who then help like-minded individuals to get jobs; ■ A children's commissioner or ombudsman to listen to children's complaints; ■ Better communications be-

tween social service departments to make sure that people who leave one job in disgrace, but are not prosecuted, cannot get new jobs in homes; ■ Possible protection of paedophiles from prosecution by a network of sympathisers in positions of responsibility.

Mr Morgan said: "A judicial inquiry could look at whether there was a ring extending into the police which led to the delay in the prosecution or investigation."

The 300-page report, by John Jillings former director of social services in Derbyshire. Professor Jane Tunstall, professor of social work at Keele University, and child care specialist, Gerilyn Smith, has more than 50 recommendations, but its chief one is that their must be an inquiry.

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, yesterday sought to reclaim his authority over Labour's tax plans with a ringing assertion of his right not to set out detailed rates.

In an attack on accountants and tax advisers for "peddling lies" about Labour's plans, he read the riot act to his Shadow Cabinet colleagues, reminding them not to engage in public speculation about tax.

But he found himself under siege on another front as his plans to stop child benefit for 16-18 year olds came under fire from the Government and his own MPs.

Leading accountants, including KPMG and Ernst & Young, recently advised clients

to take action to avoid possible higher rates of income tax on incomes above £40,000 a year under a Labour government. Mr Brown said: "People would be better gambling on the lottery than on the random advice coming from some of these sources."

Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, said: "If Mr Hamish McRae weighs up Brown's options, page 15"

Brown doesn't like it he has a simple remedy—publish the tax plans and be damned."

Douglas Fairhair, national tax partner of Ernst & Young, responded: "Until Labour publish firm proposals, we have a duty to our clients to take Labour's published statements

and try to make sense of them. Some degree of educated guessing is inevitable."

Mr Brown's speech, to a business audience in London, was also aimed at his own party. Tax advisers' guesswork appeared to be supported by remarks from Clare Short, Labour's transport spokeswoman, and John Prescott, deputy leader, in recent weeks.

Mr Brown said: "It is for the shadow chancellor to make our tax decisions... and that is the way it will stay."

Ms Short and Mr Prescott were backed by Roy Hattersley, former deputy Labour leader, who said their comments on tax were of no political significance. "Both comments were blown up into stories in part because of the instinctive malice of some newspapers," he said.

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C4 guilty of breaches in broadcast code

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Channel 4 is expected to face renewed criticism today for its reliance on repeats and be rebuked for a lack of original material.

The criticism, in the annual report by commercial television's regulator, follows a channel apology by the channel last night for three examples of bad language in *TFI Friday*, a live programme presented by

Chris Evans which is screened at 6pm. The apology to the Independent Television Commission for "clearly unacceptable breaches" was followed by a promise that that show would be pre-recorded in future.

The ITC's report for 1995, published today, is understood to reprimand the channel—also accused of a decline in original material—for another rise in the number of repeats. The same complaint was made last year.

John 20150

Media mogul 'forced models to have sex'

The socialist millionaire businessman Owen Oyston raped two teenage models at his country home after they were told he could help their careers, a court was told yesterday.

One of the girls, a 17-year-old virgin at the time of the alleged attack, claimed that Mr Oyston, 62, who has wide media interests and is the chairman of Blackpool Football Club, ignored her pleas to stop as he forced her to have sex.

And his second alleged victim, who was just 16, was forced to have oral sex with Mr Oyston in the back of a car before being ordered to join him and another woman in bed.

Both girls had been led to believe by Peter Martin, the head of their Manchester modelling agency, Model Team, that Oyston could help their careers. But they stayed silent about their ordeal for years, fearing that nobody would believe them.

Mrs Helen Grindrod QC, for the prosecution, told Liverpool Crown Court.

She said that neither girl had complained to the police until 1995 following publicity in late 1994 about the agency.

"Amongst those interviewed at that time were these two young women who for the first time told the police the story of what had happened."

"You may find it easy to understand that when something comes about such as the knowledge that there were other people, it is easier to talk."

Mr Oyston, of Cloughton Hall, near Lancaster, denies

raping the first woman between January 1988 and December 1989 and to raping and indecently assaulting the second between October and December 1991.

The first model wiped away tears as she told the jury of eight women and four men how Mr Oyston forced her into sex as she was driven to his isolated, castle-like house by Mr Martin, a friend of Mr Oyston.

She said the millionaire told her he wanted to show her the house but quickly led into the main bedroom. She asked to go to the bathroom and emerged to find Oyston sitting on the bed wearing only his shirt.

"He told me to come and sit next to him. I was scared. I was young and frightened."

Mr Oyston then ordered her to remove her underwear. "He laid down next to me and leaned over and flung his hands across my chest. He then climbed over on top of me. He just said shut up and do as you are told. I was crying."

She said: "I kept saying I don't want to do it. He kept saying I can learn you a few things."

She eventually struggled free and left the house. "I was disgusted with myself," she said, adding that she was too frightened to tell her parents.

She said it was only the second time she had met Mr Oyston, who she said had struck her as "quite sleazy" when he was introduced to her by Mr Martin as "someone quite important" who could help her career only a few weeks earlier.

The model denied that she had a loo affair with Mr Oyston, and said she never had sex with him again. She admitted accepting money from him twice: "I don't know why I took it at the time. I was involved with piles of money."

Mr Oyston sat in the dock studiously taking notes as Mrs Grindrod told the jury how the second alleged victim was also driven to his home by Mr Martin in the middle of the night.

Mr Martin was driving with another girl, Lisa Rowbottom, in the front of his car and Oyston and the 16-year-old in the cramped back seats. During the journey Mr Oyston had forced her to have oral sex.

When they reached Cloughton Hall Mr Oyston took the two girls into a bedroom.

"She sat on a chair. Lisa seemed to know more about why she was there, went into a bathroom, undressed, got in bed with Mr Oyston and had sexual intercourse."

"Oyston then ordered her to get in bed with them. She did what she was told. Oyston had sexual intercourse with her with Lisa still in the bed."

"She lay still and unresponsive making it clear that she was not consenting."

When questioned by police Oyston said it was too cramped for oral sex in the back of the car and also denied the rape. "He agreed that he had sex with Lisa on more than one occasion but denied ever having sex in the presence of a third party."

The case continues.



Owen Oyston arriving at court yesterday with his wife Vicki. Photograph: Phil Coppell

Diet campaign is rejected despite warning on poor

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

The Government yesterday rejected plans for a multi-million pound healthy-eating campaign as experts warned that improving the diet of the poor was the only solution to the chronic illness and early death in this group.

The Low Income Project Team, an offshoot of the Government's own Nutrition Task Force, said that dietary factors were to blame for the higher rates of heart disease, strokes, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, lung and digestive disorders, and obesity among the less well off.

In a second report, also published yesterday, the Task Force recommended a campaign to persuade people to eat more bread, pasta, rice, fruit and vegetables, and fish, funded at £3.5m a year for up to five years. The Government dismissed this, claiming that it was for other sectors to "grasp the marketing opportunities presented by the quest for healthy eating."

The National Food Alliance, an independent consumer watchdog, immediately questioned the Government's commitment to Health of the Nation targets for improving diet. It also criticised ministers for banning discussion on benefit levels by the experts compiling the report.

The Low Income Project report said: "Many of [the diseases] can be argued to have a dietary component in their causation which is consistent with the differences in food consumption between social classes, such as lower consumption of whole grain cereal products, fruit and vegetables and lower

intakes of dietary fibre and anti-oxidant nutrients."

It said that some people on low income, often young mothers, went without food regularly. "Young householders, the unemployed, those on benefit payments or very low incomes, especially those living in local authority accommodation with rent or fuel deductions from benefit payments, have the greatest difficulties and the worst diets," claimed the LIPT.

The report concluded that infants in low income households were less likely to be breastfed and had a higher prevalence of anaemia. Toddlers had higher intakes of saturated fatty acids and sugar and lower intakes of dietary fibre and vitamins. They had slower growth, more were overweight and suffered tooth decay.

Children aged 10 to 15 had lower intakes of most vitamins and minerals and suffered lower levels of activity and bone mass, plus more anaemia.

Pregnant women had lower energy and nutrient intakes and higher instances of anaemia, still births and low birthweight infants. Older people had lower nutrient intakes, poorer immune systems, and higher rates of illness and death for most diet-related diseases.

The second report by the Nutrition Task Force - its last after being set up two years ago - detailed 21 recommendations for improving the nation's diet, most of which were accepted apart from plans for the new promotional campaign.

Copies of the Nutrition Task Force Report, *Eat Well II*, and the Low Income Project Team Report, are available from the Department of Health, PO Box 410, Welwyn, LS23 7LN.

Depressed men turn to the bottle in despair

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

Thousands of depressed men are unable to articulate their despair or seek medical help for their plight, and turn instead to drink and drugs, according to a report today from the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Under-diagnosis of clinical depression in men may be as high as 65 per cent, the report says, and suicide is three times more likely in men than women.

Widowed, divorced, and separated men are most vulnerable but the suicide rate is rising in married men too. In the 16 to 24 age group - young single males - there has been a 75 per cent rise in suicides since 1982.

The College blames the fact

that men visit their doctors less often than women, and are more likely to talk about the physical symptoms of their depression, rather than the emotional and psychological ones.

The College's *Factsheet on Depression in Men* is published to coincide with an Action Day for Depressed Men as part of its on-going Defeat Depression campaign. It says: "There has been a general lack of recognition by doctors and other specialists that [men's] needs and worries may be different from that of women."

"This might mean thinking of innovative ways of taking health services out to men in their isolation, or the context in which they meet or work."

Let's help men, page 17

Branson accused of harassment

DAVID USBORNE
New York

A whimsically choreographed appearance by Richard Branson, dressed in an astronaut's suit on Times Square to open the New York flagship of his Virgin Megastore music chain, was rained upon yesterday by sexual harassment allegations lodged against him by a former employee.

Elizabeth Hlinko, a former public relations manager with his airline, Virgin Atlantic, filed suit against Mr Branson in a federal United States court last Friday, accusing him of making unwanted advances to her at a party at his British country home in May 1994, including grabbing at her breasts.

Ms Hlinko of New York is also accusing Mr Branson as

well as a second defendant in the suit, David Tait, executive vice-president of Virgin Atlantic, of discrimination, suggesting that after the incident in England, she was gradually frozen out of the company and eventually forced to resign.

Mr Branson vowed yesterday to contest the suit. He told the *Independent* he had no memory of the alleged scene and said he hoped the suit would be thrown out by the courts. The party in question, he suggested, had been attended by his wife, his parents and "50 to 60 press people".

"Personally, I don't have any recollection of this and I don't think anybody will have any recollection of anything at all. People I have talked to have no recollection of it," he said, adding: "I am as confident as I

can be that this will be struck out of the courts in a couple of months' time."

News of the lawsuit provided an awkward counterpoint to the extravaganza that played out on Times Square at noon yesterday. With the streets almost closed off and the pavements jammed with gawking tourists, the space-suited Mr Branson was lowered several storeys to street level on an inflated replica of the ball that is lowered in the square on New Year's Eve.

The bursts of nervous laughter from Mr Branson as the ball made its jerky descent were presumably out of fear for his physical safety than concern about about the lawsuit. But once inside the shop, Mr Branson was instantly questioned about Ms Hlinko.

Noting that lawyers for Ms

Hlinko had publicised the suit on the day of the store's opening, he complained: "One of the problems of America is that people can file claims and then people read about them and it is very difficult to defend yourself and very quickly the damage is done."

Mr Branson said he and his lawyers had rejected a request received three months ago from Ms Hlinko's lawyers for an out-of-court settlement.

Gary Ireland, Ms Hlinko's lawyer, was unrepentant about the suit's timing. "This behaviour cannot be tolerated," he said, referring to its core allegations. The court papers focus on the party and alleges that there, "in the presence of other employees and guests ... Branson made unwelcome advances to [Hlinko] by fondling and grabbing her breasts".

Moth hunters rake through gardens

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

A hunt for a hairy and highly destructive caterpillar is about to begin in Essex. The Ministry of Agriculture wants to ensure the Asian gypsy moth does not get a foothold in Britain.

The moth's 2in-long larvae can munch through large areas of forest once its population builds up.

It has been spreading gradually into Europe from Asia. It reached Germany three years ago and has caused severe damage to plantations.

Last summer, it was found in gardens in South Woodford, Essex for the first time. Ministry of Agriculture officials eradicated it with insecti-

cide, and they are about to return to check if any caterpillars have hatched out this year.

The officials will also issue leaflets to the householders helping them to identify the pest.

The fear is that the insect or its eggs could reach Britain in cars, lorries or imports which have come from already-infested areas in Eastern Europe. Its numbers could boom once it arrives because of the absence of its natural predators and diseases.

The Forestry Commission has also set up pheromone traps at Britain's ports. These emit the potent chemical which the moths use to attract their mate - but the traps lure the insects to their doom.

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news

RSPCA wants harder line to fight cruelty

ROS WYNNE-JONES

The RSPCA yesterday called for harsher penalties for animal cruelty as it unveiled national figures showing a sharp increase in cases of neglect. Last year incidents of basic neglect, as opposed to direct ill-treatment, rose by 7 per cent, accounting for three-quarters of all RSPCA convictions for animal cruelty.

Revealing that 1,648 cases of neglect were discovered in 1995, the animal-welfare charity argued for tougher penalties and a scheme to microchip and nationally register dogs. Phone calls to the society had increased by 19 per cent to more than 1.2 million, with officials responding to an animal-welfare inquiry every 26 seconds.

Cases of deliberate ill-treatment had fallen for the second year running, with the number of cruelty convictions falling by 4 per cent to 2,301. However, attacks on horses had risen by 66 per cent, from 124 in 1994 to 206 in 1995.

Yesterday the charity displayed some of the worst-neglected animals it had rescued last year, including a wealthy businessman's dog which had been left to starve in a filthy shack, and a miniature poodle which no longer resembled a dog when it was discovered.

Bairbre O'Malley, an RSPCA veterinary surgeon who last year had to destroy a puppy which had been beaten around the head with a hammer, said: "It can be very difficult not to

get disheartened. Sometimes I am staggered when people say they didn't know their animal was suffering."

Richard Davies, the RSPCA's chief inspector, described how his officers were forced to deal every day with the symptoms of neglect, including animals with illnesses left untreated for months. "It outrages me that so many of the cases that RSPCA inspectors come across could



Pictures showing how this poodle, Snowy, recovered from severe neglect

have been avoided," he said. "In terms of the suffering inflicted, neglect is as unforgivable as outright brutality. No one should take on an animal unless they have thought carefully about the cost, the time and the commitment involved in looking after it. The keeping of an animal brings with it moral and legal responsibilities."

He added that dogs remained the main target of abuse and compulsory dog registration was an initiative which "any enlightened society would introduce without resistance".

The RSPCA has sought to stamp out the impulse buying of pets - one of the main reasons for animals being neglected - and hopes a government-backed registration scheme to replace the old dog licensing system can be introduced soon.

One of the worst cases of neglect the RSPCA dealt with last year was that of the miniature poodle, Snowy, whose plight only came to light when it was dumped at a London police station. Underweight and uncared for, its hair was so matted it could barely see. As well as suffering from scabies, her skin was burnt from where she had lain in her own urine. She later recovered and was fostered to responsible owners.

In another case, RSPCA officials were astonished to discover that a wealthy businessman was keeping a starving Great Dane in his garden out-house. The dog, called Duke, was barely able to walk after months of neglect and was suffering from severe mange.

His owner, a property consultant from Kilburn, north-west London, was eventually banned by a court from keeping a dog for five years. Duke has since been found a new home.

■ The RSPCA's 24-hour national helpline number for reporting cases of cruelty and neglect is 0990-555-999.



The beat goes on: A busker making music at a Tube station yesterday while the High Court heard Franco de Cristofaro's appeal. Photograph: Philip Meech

Busker counts cost of appearance on the Tube

LOUISE JURY

The normally staid surroundings of the High Court in London were enlivened by the sound of music yesterday in a challenge to the ban on busking at London's underground stations.

A motley band gathered in the Strand to back fellow musician Franco de Cristofaro, a 48-year-old Italian saxophonist, drummer and member of the Magic Circle. Funded by

the London Public Entertainers' Collective, de Cristofaro was asking for a conviction at Bow Street magistrates court for breaching London Transport (LT) by-laws to be overturned.

Mr Justice Newman, sitting with Lord Justice Pill, dismissed the appeal, but despite the defeat of Cristofaro and his supporters were heartened when LT announced it was examining the by-laws which prohibit the playing of musical instruments,

gramophones and wireless apparatus on the tube network.

The High Court heard how de Cristofaro was found playing the drums with a four-piece band at Piccadilly Circus station in March last year. Tim Clerk, for the musician, said an offence was caused if the general public were annoyed, but there was no evidence of this. A separate by-law prohibited begging or "soliciting for reward", but de Cristofaro had not asked for

any money, although two people were spotted dropping coins in his open drum case and a colleague had been shaking a tin in the manner of a maraca.

The band was simply playing music and "if people are pleased enough with it, people give money", Mr Clerk said. But Peter Ader, for British Transport Police, said an explicit request did not have to be made for soliciting to take place. Afterwards, de Cristofaro,

of Camden, north-west London, said: "I'm very sad because we are genuine buskers. We never harass people for money. We play our music, we are good entertainers." He would return to busking to pay the £2,000 or more he still owed in fines.

Two other buskers, Mike Kay and Jeremy Helm, will argue at the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg that the LT ban on busking is a breach of the human right to artistic expression.

Tycoon in will case was expected to live longer

JOJO MOYES

The nephew of the multi-millionaire Eric Hopton, who died before his new will was completed, had been told by a doctor that his uncle could live for another year.

Eric Hopton's great nephew, 22-year-old Dominic Trusted, is suing Clifford Chance, Britain's highest legal firm, for not ensuring Eric Hopton, a property developer worth £50m, executed a new will before he died of heart failure.

But Christopher Hopton told the High Court that just before Hopton's death in January 1991, aged 72, he had been told he "should live until summer". Christopher was one of the

executors of the will and had been liaising between Eric Hopton and David Bowyer, a partner at Clifford Chance. On Eric Hopton's instructions, Christopher, a lawyer, had amended his uncle's new will late in 1990. Eric Hopton had already suffered a heart attack in March 1990.

Under the 1984 will Mr Trusted stood to receive substantially less than in the incomplete will. The court heard that Eric Hopton's relationship with the Trusted side of the family was not close.

The court was told that the 1984 will had contained an "anti-attack" clause: "I believe my uncle confirmed to Mr Bowyer that it was still from the

Trusted side of the family that any attack might come," Christopher Hopton said.

One of the chief beneficiaries of the will, Christopher Hopton says he had a "very good relationship" with his uncle.

But giving evidence, Eric Hopton's housekeeper, Sylvia Jean Jones, said that Eric Hopton had been "very cross" just before he died, to receive as a Christmas present from Christopher a photograph of Christopher's son, of whom he had received another photograph the previous Christmas.

"Mr Hopton was not at all pleased. He was quite cross and angry. He wanted to tear up the photograph..." she said. The case continues.

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news

Row over expelled pupil: Strike-threat teachers to consider package agreed by parents, head and authority

Special classes for disruptive boy, 13

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Richard Wilding, 13, was yesterday receiving individual tuition at his school in Nottingham where teachers have threatened to strike from Friday over his violent and disruptive behaviour if he is not removed.

The row has escalated since a local authority panel ordered that Richard, who was expelled from Glaisdale School after a history of violent incidents which led four times to temporary exclusion, should be returned to the school. Staff claimed that he was a threat to both to them and to other pupils, and members of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers voted to strike indefinitely rather than have him in the classroom.

Since the beginning of term, Richard has been taught on his own by the head and one other teacher. Last night, in a statement agreed between his parents, Rita

and Philip Wilding, the local education authority and the school's head, Mr and Mrs Wilding's solicitor Hilary Freeman said: "Following a very constructive meeting... agreement has been reached for Richard's future education to take place partly at Glaisdale School which will eventually lead to reintegration into classes."

An education authority spokesman said the special arrangements proposed for Richard Wilding would not involve him being taught by any of the school's existing teachers, or in a mainstream class. He would spend one day being taught at home by a special tutor, and one at school by the head teacher. For another day and a half, he would be taught in school by a teacher from a special referral unit for disruptive children, and the remaining day and a half he would spend at the referral unit.

Nigel de Gruchy, the union's general secretary, said: "His reintegration would expose our



Classless: Richard Wilding at home yesterday, with the threat of a teachers' strike still hanging over Glaisdale School. Photograph: Edward Sykes

members to obvious risks. That may well be a sticking point." But he said the union needed to study the agreement in detail before taking a decision and he did not want to prejudice what his members might decide.

The headteacher, David Higgins, said he was hopeful that the

teachers' unions would accept the deal, made in a two-hour meeting with the boy's parents and local authority officials.

"I hope this will avert the strike. I am reasonably confident that it will," he said. Local officials will meet the NASUWT, which represents

20 of the school's 38 staff, today to discuss the details of the agreement.

Mr Wilding said: "We are quite happy with the arrangement. It is now up to the union - if it is unacceptable to them then it is tough luck." Richard and his mother said that they

were happy with the agreement. Staff at the school had objected to proposals that Richard should return to lessons, saying he had both learning difficulties and emotional problems and that he should be in a special unit.

On Monday the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian

Shepherd, criticised the local authority for the dispute, and said that the right place had obviously not been found for Richard. However, she also criticised teachers for putting children's education at risk by threatening to strike.

Leading article, page 16

Rock rolls back to Hyde Park at last

MICHAEL STREETER

Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan will headline the first Hyde Park rock concert for 20 years, it was announced yesterday.

The show, on Saturday, 29 June, is in aid of the Prince's Trust, the Prince of Wales's charity. A crowd of 150,000 is expected for the first concert in the park in central London to charge. Tickets, at £8, and television could raise £500,000.

The all-star line up will also feature former Who members Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend and John Entwistle in a performance of the band's rock opera *Quadrophenia*. Another confirmed star is the US singer Alanis Morissette, though concert organiser Harvey Goldsmith says there is a "secret" list of other big names, thought to include Phil Collins.

At a press conference yesterday, Townshend said: "It's very exciting. It is a chance to do something adventurous."

Tom Shebbeare, executive director of the Prince's Trust, described the event as "exceptional". The last rock concert in Hyde Park was by Queen in 1976. The Rolling Stones and Blind Faith drew in the crowds in 1969 while Pavarotti's much-hyped opera concert in 1991 was drenched by a rain.

The MasterCard Masters of Music concert, to mark the Euro '96 football championship final the next day, will be the highest one-day rock event since Blackbushe in 1978, in Berkshire, also starring Dylan and Clapton. Questions remain, such as the task of making sure everyone pays.



Bob Dylan: Helping revive rock in the park concerts

Infants sent off to nursery school 'like young animals'

JUDITH JUDD

Parents who send their children to school at the age of two may regret the consequences, an independent school headmistress said yesterday.

Paddy Holmes, head of Ditchfield Park School, Petersfield, Hampshire, warned that young children were being treated "like young animals", as the census showed that two-year-olds are the fastest growing group in fee-paying schools. Their numbers were up 27

per cent to 4,584. Proportions of three- and four-year-olds also increased sharply.

Mrs Holmes said: "We are really beginning as a nation to produce children treated in many ways more like young animals, staying with their mothers only as long as they are biologically dependent."

Some children were being sent to school in nappies because both parents worked or because their father or mother was a single parent and had to work. Mrs Holmes, chairman of

the Independent Schools Association Incorporated, argued that the number of fee-paying toddlers had increased because more mothers wanted to have children and a career. A private school (fees around £600 a term for under-fives) might be the only alternative to a nanny.

"It works well socially and educationally. But we may well live to reap the dividends in emotional terms from children who are separated from their parents from 8am to 6pm from the age of two," she said.

Research over many years showed that the younger children were taken away from their mother or stand-in mother for many hours a day, the more likely they were to have problems later.

However, she argued that well-organised nursery education might be the best option if children had to be parted from their parents. Where such facilities were available, two- and three-year-olds were not given formal teaching but helped to socialise and play constructively.

Chris Evers, the head of Cheam Hawtrey School in Newbury, Berkshire, and chairman of the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools, said that parents were sending their children to school at two because they needed diversions for their energy which the average family could not provide.

Independent schools said yesterday that the feelgood factor had returned as numbers in fee-paying schools rose for the first time in five years. But the

rise was only 0.6 per cent and the number of boarders continued to fall. The biggest increases were among the under-fives and pupils from abroad.

Fee-paying schools now account for about 7 per cent of the school population, about the same proportion as they did before the late Eighties boom. The number of secondary-school pupils, apart from sixth-formers, is still falling but prep school numbers are up. Last year, 15 new schools opened and only 8

closed. Spending on buildings, at £551 per pupil, reached record levels.

The figures come from the Independent Schools Information Service's annual census and cover 464,990 pupils, 80 per cent of those in all private schools.

Boarding numbers were down by 3.5 per cent, the lowest fall since 1991, while day pupil numbers were up for the third successive year. The rise was 1.5 per cent, higher than in the previous three years.

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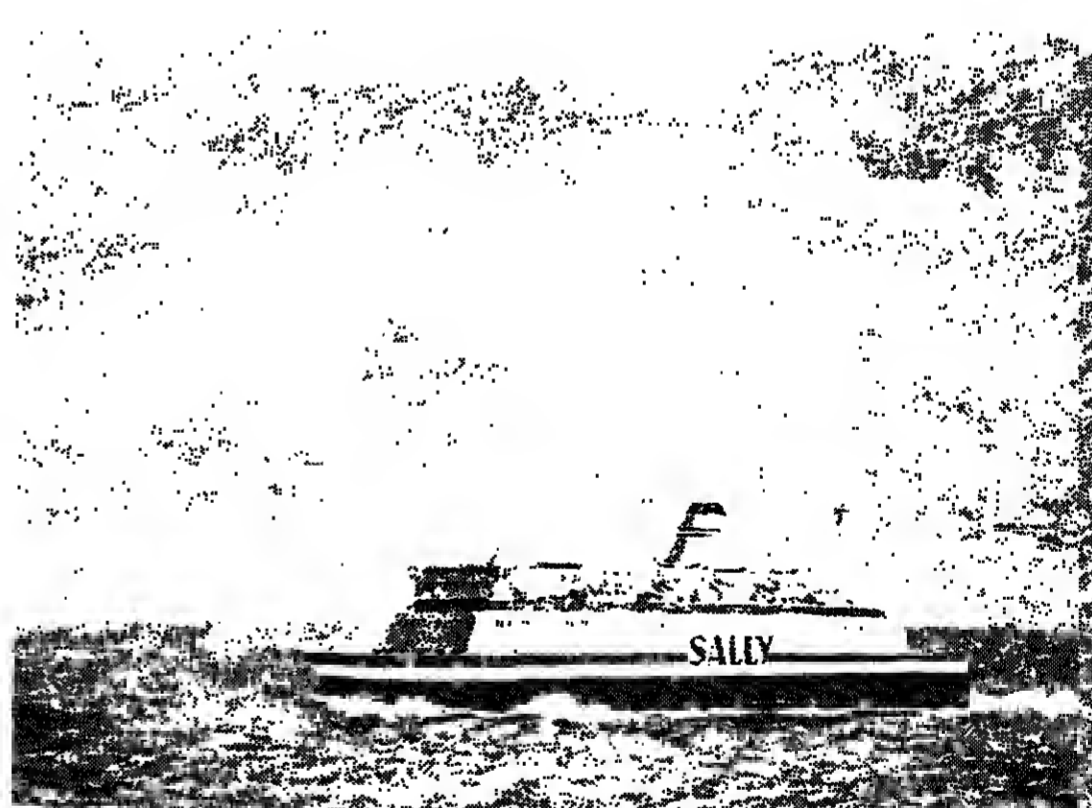
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Self Portrait

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Nurses' congress: Individual rights valued above health risk to fighters

RCN defies doctors by opposing boxing ban

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

Defying their colleagues at the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing yesterday voted overwhelmingly against a ban on boxing.

Delegates at the RCN's annual congress in Bournemouth conceded there were serious health risks, but decided that prohibition would infringe individual rights and make the sport more dangerous by driving it underground.

Christine Hancock, general secretary of the college, said the BMA's decision had been based on clinical information 10 years ago which indicated that damage was more likely.

Speaking against a ban Michael Hayward, of Portsmouth, told delegates: "The RCN cannot and should not be seen to be publicly taking away further rights and choices of the individual. It is not our place to be self-righteous and sanctimonious."

Mr Hayward, a coronary care nurse and a former military policeman who boxed in the army, added: "Boxing is not safe. That cannot be disputed. Two people knocking two bells of the proverbial out of each other is not conducive to good health. However, it is their health and their bodies."

He said there had been more deaths in other sports such as rugby, powerlifting and motor racing. The motion to ban boxing was opposed by 75 per cent of delegates.

Brian Kaye, chairman of the Society for Nursing People with a learning disability, moving

the proposition, said delegates should ask themselves whether they wanted to live in a society where people paid to watch one individual deliberately inflicting damage on another.

Mr Kaye, of Ashworth high security hospital on Merseyside, had nursed a former professional boxer who sustained severe brain damage and who had committed violent offences as a consequence.

Supporters of boxing said it was character building, Mr Kaye said: "But what sort of character do we want to build? The kind of character based on the ability to assault others?"

Seconding the proposition, Astrid Henderson, a colleague of Mr Kaye at Ashworth, took issue with the assertion that there had only been 15 deaths from boxing since 1945. She pointed out that the statistics only covered professional fighters. She said that 500 boxers had died as a result of neurological injuries since 1884.

An RCN document reminded delegates that in recent times two boxers - Bradley Stoke and James Murray - had died as a result of their boxing injuries. Such tragedies had led to renewed calls for legislation to prohibit professional boxing, but a Bill in 1995 was opposed by the Government, which argued that it was an established and highly regulated sport and part of Britain's sporting heritage.

Medical evidence suggested that a severe blow to the head resulted in the death of brain cells. Boxers who received successive blows to the head may suffer irreversible brain damage.

Local pay could provoke action

BARRIE CLEMENT

Ministers were warned by the moderate Royal College of Nursing yesterday that they risked provoking outbreaks of industrial action through their determination to introduce local pay into the National Health Service.

Christine Hancock, general secretary of the college, questioned the "individual independence and integrity" of Pay Review Body members who co-operated with the Government's policy of shifting salary negotiations down to trust level.

Speaking after the RCN annual congress in Bournemouth overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for a restoration of the body's independence, she said national pay awards avoided disruption of services.

"The spectre of industrial action is associated with local pay, not with the national scenario. That's the risk the Government is introducing in a fragmented local pay system."

Last year, the college abandoned its ban on industrial action in the wake of a decision

by the Pay Review Board to award a 1 per cent national increase to nurses, enhanced by up to 2 per cent in trust-based bargaining. This year the body offered a 1 per cent rise, but gave no guidelines for local negotiations.

The RCN conference fought shy of a motion declaring that the pay advisory organisation was "no longer an appropriate body" for nurses, instead it backed a resolution, backed by 94 per cent of delegates, calling on the college's national council to work for greater independence.

A series of angry delegates rounded on the national salary committee for following the Government's line. Ms Hancock said that the debate constituted "a very strong personal attack on the integrity and independence of members of the review body".

Sylvia Thomas, a representative on the national shop stewards' committee, said that the Government's policy had set "nurses against doctors, hospital against hospital and trust against trust".

Policy change over employing offenders

The Royal College of Nursing is today expected to call for rules preventing serious criminal offenders practising as nurses after a convicted rapist was allowed to resume his career.

The college is already taking legal action to overturn last month's decision by the United Kingdom Central Council on Nursing, the nurses' disciplinary body, which decided to readmit Yuen How Choy.

Mr Choy, 50, a nurse specialising in mental health, raped a former patient in her home in 1983. He received a two-year

sentence, 12 months of which were suspended and was struck off by the UKCC. He had a previous conviction in 1972 for drugging a patient in order to have sex with her.

Speaking at a fringe meeting in Bournemouth, Tariq Hussain, director responsible for professional conduct at the council, said the UKCC might consider changing its policy over the readmission of nurses at a meeting in June. That could mean the council banning rapists and other offenders.

Mr Hussain said that a special committee had made the decision to restore Mr Choy after receiving a series of personal references.

One was from the manager of a psychiatric clinic, another from a professional colleague, and a recommendation from a GP.

He was "very open about the offence and showed remorse for his behaviour," Mr Hussain said.

Mr Hussain said the council was keen to ensure that people who were not fit to be on the nurses' register were removed very quickly.



In flower: Ken Gardener, warden of Gilsdale, Co Durham, and the daffodils blooming for the first time in living memory Photograph: Ted Ditchburn

Rare bloom for host of daffodils

Some long overdue restoration on an 18th century estate has helped a rare species of daffodil to bloom again.

The gardens of Gilsdale estate in County Durham were created by the whig MP George Bowles in the mid to late 1700s, but decades of neglect has deprived recent generations of the sight of the daffodils, which are believed to have been planted by his daughter, Mary.

The bright yellow daffodils, known as *telamonius plenius*, have more petals than normal and instead of a firm centre trumpet, there is a clutch of softer petals almost like a carnation.

Ken Gardener, warden of the National Trust estate, said: "We had cleared all the brambles and weeds and this must have allowed the sun through to the soil. Now we know how Wordsworth must have felt when he saw his host of golden daffodils."

One expert has already offered to buy the bulbs, but they are classed as wild flowers and not for sale.

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06

news

Police dig up garden for missing woman

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

Police were excavating in the garden of a house yesterday in search of the body of an 18-year-old woman who disappeared more than four years ago.

The residents of the council house, a 59-year-old woman and her 26-year-old son, were being questioned as the excavations took place.

Nicola Payne went missing on 14 December 1991 as she made a 10-minute walk from her boyfriend's house to her parents' house in Coventry. The house being searched yesterday was in Wood End, about 150 yards from Ms Payne's home.

Digging took place in pouring rain in three spots in the large garden, including an area under the garden shed, in patches where electronic equipment suggested that the soil had been disturbed. The police were being helped by a team who used radar machines to search the house in Cromwell Street, Gloucester, where the mass murderers Frederick and Rosemary West lived. The Coventry excavations took place in a garden 18ft by 100ft.



Nicola Payne: Disappeared on foggy night in 1991.

The operation, which involved 35 officers from the West Midlands Police, began at 6am when they went to the house with a search warrant. This followed new information passed to the police after an appeal in December about the missing teenager. Police said the two people at the house that they were investigating were "aware" of Ms Payne but refused to give further details.

Ms Payne disappeared at just after 12.10pm after leaving the home of her boyfriend, Jason Cooke, in thick fog. She had taken her seven-month-old son, Owen, to stay with his father as the couple made last-minute plans for moving into their new three-bedroom house the next weekend.

That day the area was enveloped in thick fog, and Nicola was last seen setting off into the mist across a piece of wasteland known locally as the Black Pad. Four years later, despite a massive police search, and a total of £10,000 in reward money offered by her family and friends, no trace of her has been found.

Police said yesterday that Jason Cooke had been ruled out of the investigation.

Detective Superintendent Bob Minshall said that several potential burial sites had been found using radar and electronic probing equipment.

He said yesterday: "We have found several sites that we are now looking at closely. We have moved one of the garden sheds and lifted flagstones. So far we have found nothing but we are pressing ahead."

A police dog specially trained to search for human remains was used during the search, along with a ground-probing radar and electrical resistance equipment to search the soil for buried objects.

Any "hot spots" identified will be examined by Professor John Hunter, a forensic science archaeologist from Birmingham University.

The search may take up to four days to complete. Officers are also stressing that the operation is just one new line of inquiry in the case, and that nobody has been arrested.

John Payne, Nicola's father, said: "Part of me wants to know so we can come to some conclusion and get on with the grieving process, but another part of me doesn't want to know the truth if it is bad news."

"If they do find anything it will be what I have always dreaded, but on the other hand at least I will know something for sure."

He said of the household being searched: "We know the family quite well because Nicola and her youngest son were at school together. My lad and their eldest son were mates."

Under siege: Hereford's city wall threatened by ravages of time



Crumbling: Dave Baxter inspecting Hereford's ancient city wall, parts of which need restoring

Photograph: Rob Stratton

Defences attacked by new enemies

Hereford's ancient city walls are facing the biggest threat to their future since 12,000 Roundheads tried to reduce the red sandstone defences to rubble in 1645.

During a six-week siege the Earl of Leven's Scots army dug a series of underground mines which were then set alight in a bid to collapse the walls protecting the Royalist stronghold.

The move failed, but the mile-long 13th-century walls are now under attack on at least

three fronts from a new enemy - severe erosion, traffic pollution and self-seeding plants which are damaging the stonework. The circular walls are still 16ft high in places and the remains are a scheduled ancient monument of national importance.

But tomorrow Hereford planners will discuss a report by conservation officer Dave Baxter which says the wall has been neglected, abused and left to deteriorate during the

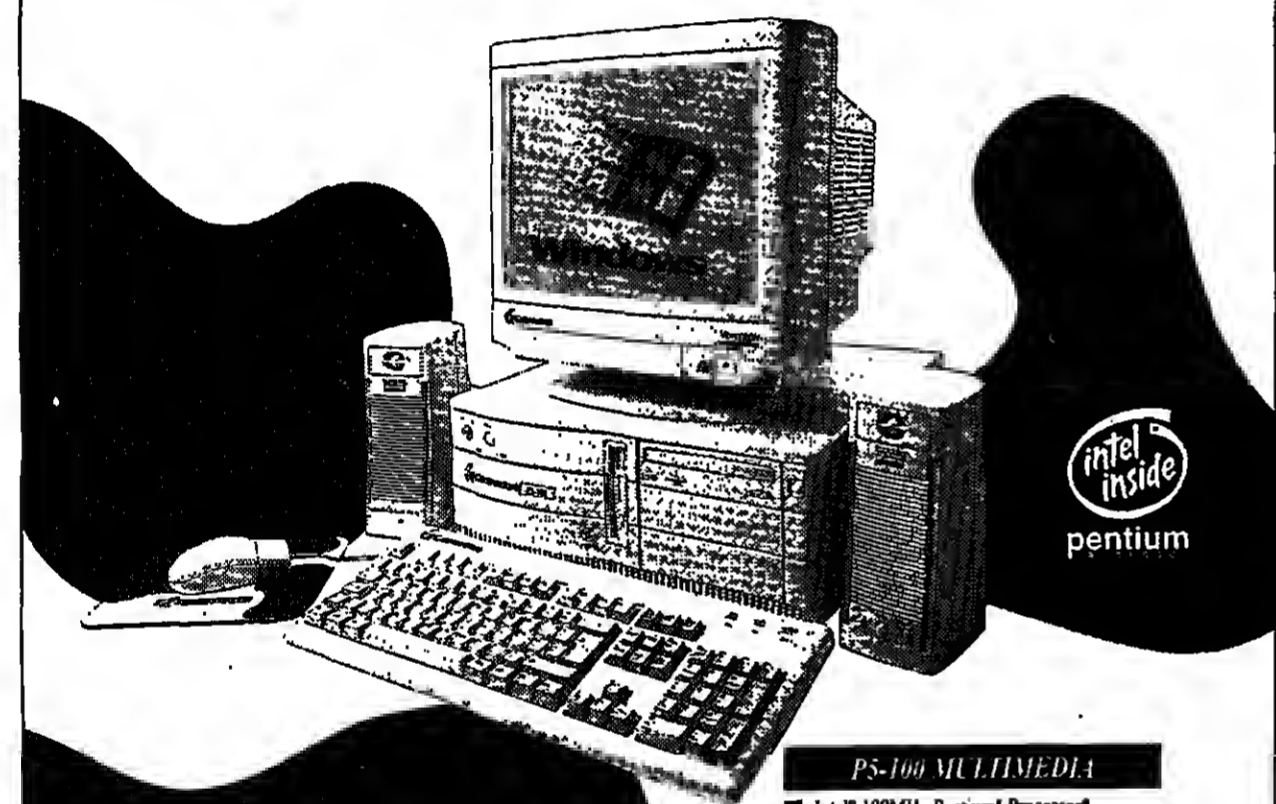
years and warns: "It is essential that this situation is remedied ... to secure the life and appearance of the wall."

Councillors are expected to approve his calls for a repair programme to be prepared and costed in association with English Heritage. It will involve the removal of cherry trees and huddles which have self-seeded on the wall. The report also says some sections have been defaced by graffiti and are bulging with fractures in the stonework

and some stones missing. Workmen took 60 years to erect the city walls. Only two of the 17 original half-round towers remain and all six main gates were demolished during the 1790s.

Hereford's director of archaeology, Ron Shoesmith, said the remaining walls "are a very significant part of Hereford's history ... some sections are in a poor state, but I don't think the neglect has been deliberate and the council are taking their responsibility seriously."

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£400m health plan dropped

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, has scrapped a controversial health-promotion programme by GPs on which the Government has spent more than £400m over the past six years.

In a deal with the British Medical Association's family doctors' committee he has agreed that from the autumn GPs will be free to agree their own health-promotion activities locally with health authorities and be paid for them.

Since 1990, in one of the more controversial parts of the

contract that Kenneth Clarke imposed on family doctors when Secretary of State for Health, they have been asked to count the numbers of their patients aged 15-74 who smoke and record their blood pressure, alcohol consumption and obesity, together with family histories of heart disease and stroke, and offer advice on better lifestyle.

At the time, academics said there was no evidence that such costly activity would improve health. And the degree of form-filling left GPs complaining that the scheme was bureaucratic, untargeted and involved counting numbers rather than improving patients' health.

The death-knell for the scheme came in 1994 with an evaluation of the British Family Heart Study. It demonstrated that much more intensive interventions by nurses aimed at changing lifestyle were "of little benefit" and concluded that given that the approach the GPs were being asked to follow was less intensive, the benefit was "likely to be even smaller".

After the prescriptive approach of the current programme, Mr Dorrell's new package goes to the other extreme, moving away from the increasingly intensive audit of doctors' activities. It allows GPs to decide with their local health

authorities what is likely to be of most benefit, taking account of local health targets and locally agreed priorities.

Family doctors will then set out the programmes they intend to follow, but once approved will then merely have to confirm they have carried out the agreed activities to be paid. The £37.5m that the scheme cost last year remains in the system to pay for the new approach. A Department of Health spokesman said the change "recognises the professional skills of GPs in developing health promotion, cuts out paperwork and directs resources to patient care rather than form-filling."

MP sues Mirror over 'untrue article'

The Conservative MP Rupert Allason yesterday launched an action for malicious falsehood against the *Daily Mirror* over an article which was "untrue in every material respect".

The MP for Torbay, representing himself, told High Court judge Sir Maurice Drake that the item, in November 1992, appeared just four days after the newspaper settled his libel action over an editorial by paying substantial undisclosed damages. The item said 50 MPs had challenged him to demonstrate his concern for Maxwell pensioners by giving them the estimated £250,000 libel damages which he won from the newspaper over articles concerning Robert Maxwell.

Mr Allason said there was no such challenge - an Early Day Motion with just seven signa-

tures had not yet come into effect. By the time it "died", within a fortnight, it still only had 31 signatures.

The amount of damages, which the newspaper had asked Mr Allason to keep confidential, was in fact £200,000.

The MP said the success of his action depended on publication of something false - which was uncontested - malice, and financial loss to himself. And he said the publicity caused him - in his role as Nigel West, author of non-fiction on security matters - to lose a publishing deal with the Holmes Security Group of New York.

The newspaper's former political editor, Alastair Campbell, political journalist Andy McSmith, now with the *Observer*, and MGN Ltd are contesting the action. The case continues.

DAILY POEM

Lorelei

By James Merrill

*The stones of kin and friend
Stretch off into a trembling, sweatlike haze.*

*They may not after all be stepping-stones
But you have followed them. Each strands you, then*

Does not. Not yet. Not here.

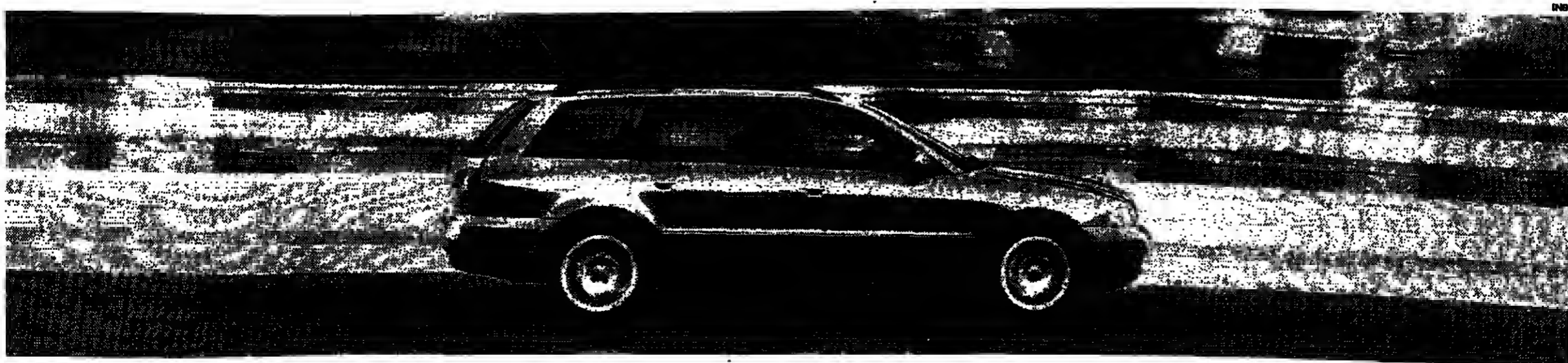
Is it a crossing? Is there no way back?

*Soft gleams lap the base of the one behind you
On which a black girl sings and combs her hair.*

*It's she who some day (when your stone is in place)
Will see that much further into the golden vagueness*

*Forever about to clear. Love with his chisel
Deepens the lines begun upon your face.*

James Merrill (1926-1995) was described by Harold Bloom as the "Mozart of American poetry", his style "classical rather than mannerist or baroque", and with a mastery of "the changing light or perfection that consoles". At his death he had published more than a dozen books of poetry and had received the Bollingen and Pulitzer prizes. His *Selected Poems* are published this week by Carcanet at £9.95.



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JAMES CUSICK

To win or not to win, that is no longer the question for the Tories of Stratford-on-Avon. Having seen their "natural Tory seat" slip gradually into the hands of the Liberal Democrats, and watched their MP Alan Howarth switch from true blue to new red, next week's local elections is not a battle the Tories of south Warwickshire are relishing.

"Men shut their doors against a setting sun," wrote the town's famous playwright. Down to only 19 of the district's 55-seat council, and holding 11 of the 18 wards up for election next week, Tory canvassers have not had an easy job convincing Stratford their sun can rise again.

Stratford is a "no overall control" council. However, the 24 Liberal Democrats and the nine independents effectively run this prosperous, predominantly rural, district. Four more seats for the Liberal Democrats will give them overall control for the first time.

Last year more than 2.5 million tourists "from the four corners of the world" flooded into Shakespeare's town. Tourism was last year worth £100m. The income from the numerous "Shakespearean" tearooms alone would probably be the envy of some Third World chancellors. Only the headquarters of the Rover car group at Gaydon challenges tourism as a wealth generator.

Stretching from Moreton-in-Marsh in the south, bound-



Winging the changes: Lady Macbeth in Stratford where Liberal Democrats may gain overall control for the first time Photograph: Brian Harris

ed by the M42 in the north-west and stretching almost to Daventry in the east, the district is dominated by Stratford. The town generates wealth, but, says the Conservative group leader, Ruth Styles, it takes a high percentage of the budget.

Mrs Styles, who retires next week after 18 years as a councillor, has watched her party's fortunes rise and then decline. She hesitates in trying to explain why, but says: "It all stems from the town of Stratford itself. It has so much money, it scarcely knows what to do with it." Kenneth Clarke should be so lucky.

Mrs Styles said Stratford was unusual in that the town council was the major landlord, which meant it did not need to raise additional revenue from residents.

Fairer distribution of the district's resources will be one issue under consideration next week. But the cut and thrust of party politics, policies, personalities and philosophies seems strangely absent. Until the mid-1970s, Stratford was "independent". It was discreetly blue, but never true blue. But as local government enmeshed itself in the identity of the national parties, the Tories took control.

Stratford council	
Current council: no overall control.	
Liberal Democrats	24
Conservatives	19
Independents	9
Labour	3
18 seats are up for re-election.	

The current council leader, Liberal Democrat Jean Holder, is similarly not too sure why party fortunes have changed. She delivers a lengthy list in explanation: "We are approachable, willing to talk, look at what people want, we

form partnerships, we listen, we are not secret." She could have been describing the Samaritans, yet the recipe has worked. Alan Howarth's defection was a disappointment, but Mrs Holder is philosophical: "I'm not sure where Alan's natural home is. I thought he was a staunch Tory who had worked for change from the inside. But I was wrong." Before the polls even open one of the existing Tories, Roger Wright in the Wellingbourne Ward, has already left the party whip and is standing as an independent. In recent elections

Liberal Democrats have been unopposed in four wards. Geraint Morgan's Labour group of three councillors, admits the area "is not natural Labour". But he has an explanation for the change in controlling parties. "The Liberal Democrats here are illusionists. You can't tell the difference between them and the Tories. So they appeal to the disillusioned Tory voters." Doubling their seats to six would be a small triumph for Labour. And triumph for the Tories? As the Bard of Avon wrote: "The miserable have no other medicine, But only hope."

Land-mine policy derided as 'a con'

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

The Government yesterday announced it would work towards achieving a total, world-wide ban on anti-personnel landmines. But in the meantime, Britain will proceed with plans to replace half its current stock with new "smart" mines which destroy themselves after a period of time. Labour reacted angrily, accusing the Government of a "con".

David Davis, a Foreign Office minister, told Parliament that Britain would destroy 44 per cent of the Army's stockpile immediately. Should an international ban be agreed, Britain would renounce all anti-personnel mines and destroy them. But otherwise the remaining 46 per cent will be replaced with new mines.

The announcement coincides with the start of the UN Weapons Convention review Conference in Geneva, but was criticised by the Opposition and international organisations, including the Red Cross, as it falls short of an immediate, unilateral gesture to destroy all of Britain's anti-personnel mines and renounce them as a weapon of war. Australia and Germany recently renounced anti-personnel mines completely.

Dr David Clark, Labour's defence spokesman, said: "The Government claims it will work for a world-wide ban on landmines. The reality is that it will buy more mines and modernise its stocks."

A report, *Landmines - an unacceptable weapon*, written by the Labour MP Ann Clwyd, was released yesterday to coincide with the Government's announcement. She said: "Today's much-hyped announcement conceals the fact they are not proposing a unilateral ban on anti-personnel mines."

Britain has not exported mines since 1982 but still holds tens of thousands in case they are needed for use. These are all "dumb" mines, which remain dangerous until cleared. "Smart" mines self-destruct after a while, so they do not endanger people years after a conflict has ended. Britain has until now resisted demands for a total ban on the grounds that it would not work as the nations exporting most deadly small mines - China, India and Pakistan - are unlikely to take any notice. Russia has declared a three-year moratorium on exporting "dumb" mines.

Mr Davis said the main concern was not the use of mines by professional armies, but in civil wars, such as those in Cambodia, Somalia and Bosnia, where they lie around and kill and maim thousands of people. There are an estimated 100 million small mines around the world, which maim or kill about 20,000 people a year.

Until now, British policy has been that "smart mines" will be more effective in reducing casualties. International organisations campaigning for a total ban argue that self-destructing mines are not reliable.

Euro-sceptics close ranks in show of strength

Tory Euro-sceptics yesterday staged a show of strength in the Commons as one of their most cerebral brothers, Iain Duncan-Smith, proposed a Bill to overrule the judgments of the European Court of Justice.

With former Cabinet ministers Norman Lamont and John Redwood sitting alongside in support, the Chingford MP said the increasingly political court had to be put in its place.

"We are ... witnessing a process of judge-made law which goes far beyond the traditional scope of the British national courts and cuts across the vital concept that law-makers should be fully accountable to their electorate," Mr Duncan-Smith told the House of Commons.

Inside Parliament
Stephen Goodwin

Though the MP's European Communities (European Court) Bill was rejected by 83 votes to 77, the significant figures was the 66 Tories who lined up to support a measure going way beyond government policy. Earlier, at Question Time,

Tony Blair had highlighted the influence of the sceptics as he exploited the mixed messages from Cabinet ministers over whether to retaliate or negotiate in response to the European Union ban on British beef.

"At some point in time, the Prime Minister will have to admit the brutal truth to himself that the business of his government is less designed at running an administration than appealing the factions within the Conservative Party," the Labour leader said.

Stung by a series of ECJ judgments, including one allowing Spanish fishermen to claim up to £30m compensation for being banned from British waters,

ministers want to reform the court during the Inter-Governmental Conference. They will attempt to get an appeals system and to limit its powers to impose retrospective costs.

Mr Duncan-Smith's Bill would have amended the European Communities Act 1972 to give Parliament a right to review judgments and doctrines of the court and overrule those considered contrary to the original domestic legislation.

"The European Court is a political court and it sees its role as the architect of European integration," he said. German and French courts had powers to review ECJ rulings and Britain should do the same.

At stake was the question whether Parliament could make, break or amend its own Acts of Parliament, Mr Duncan-Smith said.

"Entrusted with the British rights and freedoms, it's whether we are content to do this or hand these over bit by bit to Brussels."

Opposing the Bill, Charles Kennedy, Liberal Democrat spokesman on Europe, pointed out that two British companies - Ladbroke and British Petroleum - had important cases on competition policy before the European Court. "If they win... they will expect the rules to stick. But the rules would not even

have a chance of being implemented in our favour or interpreted legally, if this Bill was passed," he said.

The Government's attempt to lift the beef ban via the European Court was a "classic example of wanting to have your cake - or, your beef, in this case - and eat it," Mr Kennedy said.

"When it suits them, they're willing to use what is available to them via the ECJ. When it doesn't suit, they're willing... to tear up the entire basis of it."

The Conservatives should come clean, the MP said, adding: "If they want us out of Europe, which the passing of this Bill would be tantamount to, they should say so."

Labour in move to end candidate row

Labour chiefs look set to end the bitter legal dispute over their candidate for the Swindon North constituency today by appointing a special panel to interview the final shortlist again.

The move comes despite an attempt to force a re-run of the voting by the man defeated in the original ballot for Labour's candidate for the seat at the next general election.

Jim D'Avila, a Rover factory convenor who is backed by the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, took legal action in an attempt to win a fresh ballot after he was beaten by television producer

Michael Willis, a friend of shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown.

A Labour Party report into the selection process for the Wiltshire marginal seat found that there may have been tampering with the votes in a "fundamentally flawed" procedure.

Last month, a High Court judge urged Labour to reconsider its decision not to hold a fresh ballot, but upheld the party's right to impose a candidate. Party sources expect that members of the ruling National Executive Committee will accept a proposal that a panel should interview the final shortlist of candidates once more.

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10
international

Lebanon crisis: UN commander infuriated by claims that Hizbollah are still using bases as cover for rocket attacks on Galilee

'Israel bid to justify future massacre'

ROBERT FISK
Tyre

In an unprecedented exchange with the Israeli army, the UN commander in southern Lebanon yesterday accused his Israeli opposite number of trying to justify future Qana-style massacres by claiming that Hizbollah guerrillas are still using UN bases for cover to fire Katyusha rockets into Galilee.

General Stanislaw Wozniak, Polish commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil), wrote in a letter to the Israeli military command that the Israeli assertion was "a transparent effort to justify further tragedies, should they occur, as a result of continuing random (Israeli) shelling of Unifil area of operations."

More than 120 refugees are now known to have been massacred at Qana when Israeli 155mm guns fired salvos of shells among the 860 Lebanese civilians crowded inside the headquarters of the UN's Fijian battalion on Thursday. Bizarrely, the Israelis - accusing the same UN soldiers of allowing a Katyusha to be fired at Galilee from the same area - complained not about the Fijians but about the "New Guinea" battalion of the UN. There are no Unifil soldiers from New Guinea, which is 2,000 miles from Fiji.

In a claim which stunned UN personnel in southern Lebanon yesterday, Israel stated that UN peace-keepers were "irresponsible" in giving sanctuary to the refugees while not preventing Katyusha attacks launched from near their bases - an allegation which apparently prompted the suspicion that the Israelis wished Unifil to expel

the 5,000 refugees taking sanctuary in UN posts and thus fulfil Israel's orders to them to leave their homes.

"Until has a moral and legal obligation to offer humanitarian assistance to the people living in its area under incredibly difficult circumstances," General Wozniak retorted. "Irresponsibility is not trying to protect these innocent non-combatants, but firing at them."

Timur Goksel, Unifil's spokesman, acknowledged that General Wozniak had responded to Israel's claims, adding that "the armed elements (Hizbollah) are local people who make use of their intimate knowledge of the terrain and who move in small, mobile teams. They make sure that they are not seen from UN posts. At times there is nobody around when the rockets are fired because of the use of timers." Taking up this point, General Wozniak wrote to the Israelis that "my understanding is that it is this phenomenon and not Unifil's sheltering of innocent civilians which has brought your operations against Lebanon to its 13th day."

The Israelis claim they were firing at the site of a Katyusha rocket launch 350m from the Qana UN compound when they killed the refugees. On Sunday General Frank Van Kappen, special representative of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN Secretary-General, said he had an appointment to question the Israeli Chief of Staff, General Amnon Lifkin Shahak, about the massacre.

Yesterday it transpired he had been too busy to discuss the slaughter with the UN officer and had delegated the task to his second-in-command.



Hopeful gesture: Warren Christopher (right) at a meeting with Shimon Peres in Jerusalem

Photograph: Reuters

Defiance in the orange groves

ROBERT FISK
Batulay, southern Lebanon

Captain Ole Tomh was leading our little United Nations convoy across the battlefield of southern Lebanon. Not an auspicious name, I had to admit, as a muffled roar from far out over the orange groves set the UN radios crackling. "Two Katyushas," a Fijian voice said. The thump of Israeli shells followed, and a grey cloud rose from behind the hill line. All around us, the orchards spread away, deep green foliage lit by the golden, unpicked fruits.

We were carrying milk powder, tinned meat and fruit to two villages inside the battle zone, two hamlets set on rocky plateaus where a few hundred Lebanese civilians stubbornly refuse to leave their homes only a mile or so from the Israeli gun line. Could anyone want to go on living through this? I had to ask myself as the shells went on cracking into the neighbouring village of Qlelie. Their detonation changed the air pressure over the glistening orchards.

A humanitarian affairs officer took notes. A woman had given birth three days ago; she needed medical attention. A herd of 2,000 goats had wandered

into the village two days ago and the people were trying to water them although no-one knew from what village bombardment the animals had fled. I found the schoolmaster, Hassan Safiedin, near the UN truck. Why did he stay, I asked him, when 400,000 had fled? "It is our duty to stay on our land. It is better we should die here than run away. This is my land, my house, my home, my family. The three children killed in the ambulance [attacked by an Israeli helicopter] near here were all in my school. My children were in their class. But we must stay here all the same, to prevent any other people from taking our land."

"Why do the Israelis stay on our land?" Here the schoolmaster looked up at the Israeli gun emplacement above us. "If they would leave, the war would end. Yes, I am afraid, and so are all the people here. There are 120 of us. Yes, we would be very happy if the Israelis left and the Lebanese army came here to protect us."

We drove out of the village and back to the coast road, past the shattered ambulance, unloading more food to a Fijian UN position. And on to Batulay, the shells still swishing overhead, the same delighted faces - there were up to 700 people here who had refused Israel's orders to leave their homes.

The women walked down from their homes, some carrying children, others with middle-aged, frightened husbands. And they smiled so happily to welcome the foreigners who could not protect them, who could only hand out food and retreat to the coast, who six days ago in Qana were unable to save the lives of just such trusting, innocent people from Israel's shells.

In the jeep, the radio continued the war across southern Lebanon. "Three Katyushas," it barked. This time at Ghadourieh, probably fired at Kiryat Shmuna. It was like a sinister football report, each incoming Israeli round, each outgoing Katyusha lodged in dry military jargon. And all the while the oranges glowed from the dark orchards.

The fighting in Lebanon overshadowed the meeting in Gaza of the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, the first time it has met on Palestinian territory. Leila Khalid, the former hijacker, boycotted the session, saying: "I received a call from my sisters in Lebanon ridiculing my return and saying that they are being displaced."

Syria snubs Christopher peace drive

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem
and ASYA ABDI-HADI
Gaza

In a snub which augurs badly for an agreement to end the fighting in Lebanon, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria yesterday refused to see Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State, when he returned to Damascus on the fourth day of his shuttle in search of an agreement between Syria and Israel.

Mr Christopher was told by Syria's Foreign Minister, Farouq al-Sharaa, that President Assad was "not available", a State Department official said. The refusal to meet Mr Christopher, whom he saw twice the day before, suggests President Assad is dissatisfied with American mediation.

Syria wants to return to the 1993 understanding in Lebanon, whereby Israel and Hizbollah, the Lebanese guerrilla movement, pledge not to attack each other's civilians. Shimon Peres, the Israeli Prime Minister, who faces an election in five weeks, wants to show the bombardment of south Lebanon has produced results for Israel. He wants immunity from attack by Hizbollah for Israeli troops in the occupation zone in south Lebanon and greater freedom of action for Israeli forces to fire into villages deemed hostile.

Earlier in the day, in Jerusalem, Mr Christopher sounded more optimistic. He showed Mr Peres a one-page document, presumably outlining peace proposals. Later a White House official said of the snub by President Assad: "Do not read too much into this."

The fighting in Lebanon overshadowed the meeting in Gaza of the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, the first time it has met on Palestinian territory. Leila Khalid, the former hijacker, boycotted the session, saying: "I received a call from my sisters in Lebanon ridiculing my return and saying that they are being displaced."

Mrs Khalid sat outside the hall in the centre of Gaza City as Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO, told the Palestinian National Council the time had come to amend its charter. He has already agreed that clauses calling for the destruction of Israel should be removed.

Mr Arafat said parliament should "amend all articles that contradict the peace of the brave". He added that this would strengthen "our negotiating position and remove the pretexts with which the Israeli government is armed".

It is not a view endorsed by all members of the parliament, which claims to represent 4 million Palestinians abroad as well as 2.3 million in the West Bank and Gaza. Mrs Khalid told the *Independent* that her group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, opposed "changing the charter as this is against the goal of our people. We cannot change it until Israel recognises our national rights".

But Mr Arafat is likely to get what he wants. Under the terms of the latest Israel-Palestinian agreement, signed at Taba in Egypt last year, the council must amend or revoke the charter by 7 May. Mr Arafat looks determined to keep his promise, hoping it will speed up Israeli withdrawal from Hebron, the large Palestinian city south of Jerusalem.

Israel's military campaign in Lebanon, and the crippling blockade imposed on the West Bank and Gaza in response to suicide bombings by Palestinian militants, will make it more difficult for Mr Arafat to muster the required two-thirds majority. Abdul-Rahim Mullah, a member of the PLO executive committee, said he opposed "amendment just because it's an Israeli dictate".

To meet Israeli demands without appearing to bow to Israeli dictation, the council may vote to adopt a new charter without revoking the old one, and Mr Arafat has referred to this as one possibility.

Storm brews over Tudjman plan to rebury Croatian Fascist leader

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia said yesterday that the remains of Ante Pavelic, Croatia's Fascist leader during the Second World War, should be returned to his homeland.

In remarks likely to provoke severe criticism at home and abroad, Mr Tudjman said: "I support the idea that the bones of every Croatian man who lived for Croatia should be returned to Croatian soil. Why leave Pavelic out of it?"

In an interview with the Zagreb newspaper *Vecernji List*, he added that "Pavelic's idea of creating a Croatian state contained positive things, but it must also be acknowledged he made terrible mistakes in the implementation of his policy."

Pavelic, the leader of the extreme nationalist Ustashe movement, created a Nazi-backed puppet state known as the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in 1941. The NDH, which also included Bosnia, is best remembered for the systematic slaughter of Serbs, Jews

and Gypsies, and for aiming to kill one-third of Serbs on its territory, exile one-third and convert a third to Catholicism.

After the Nazi collapse in 1945, Pavelic went into hiding in Austria and Italy before leaving for Argentina in 1948. The then Communist Yugoslav state demanded his extradition as a war criminal, but Argentina's authorities rejected the request.

In 1957 Pavelic was wounded in an assassination attempt, believed to have been masterminded by the Yugoslav secret police. He settled secretly in

Franco's Spain, where he died in Madrid in 1959.

Mr Tudjman coupled his call for the return of Pavelic's remains with a suggestion that the founder of Communist Yugoslavia, Josip Tito, who was half-Croat, should be buried in Croatia instead of Belgrade. Mr Tudjman, a former Communist general who fought with Tito's forces, said history would remember Tito as a great wartime leader. However, it is his proposal concerning Pavelic that will cause the greatest controversy.

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IN BRIEF

'Definitive ceasefire' for Sierra Leone

Yamoussoukro — The Sierra Leone government and its rebel foes said they had agreed a ceasefire after five years of civil war. Ivory Coast's President Henri Konan Bedie, who brokered peace talks between Sierra Leone's new civilian President, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, and the rebel leader Foday Sankoh, said the agreement was the "definitive ceasefire" in a war that has devastated the West African country.

Korean aide says 'sorry' for taking bribes
Seoul — Chang Hak Ro, a former top aide to President Kim Young Sam of South Korea, confessed to taking bribes of about 700m won (£600,000) in return for business favours, and apologised in court for the scandal, which deeply embarrassed Mr Kim ahead of general elections.

'Auschwitz' supermarket plan dropped
Warsaw — Janusz Marszalek, the investor behind a controversial plan to build a supermarket near the former Auschwitz death camp, has decided to drop the project. The head of the company developing the site in southern Poland said work there had been halted and would not be resumed.

Burmese troops go hungry in jungle
Bangkok — Burmese troops at the jungle headquarters of the former opium warlord Khun Sa face a critical food shortage as anti-government guerrillas cut their supply lines according to Thai and guerrilla sources. Government troops have asked Thailand to open its border to allow supplies to come through.

Cambodia hostages fall ill
Phnom Penh — Christopher Howes, 36, a British land-mine removal expert, and his Cambodian interpreter, seized almost a month ago by suspected Khmer Rouge guerrillas, are believed to be suffering from malaria. The government's regional commander, Major General Khan Savoun, said messengers sent to act as go-betweens had reported the hostages were ill.

Death escapes young lovers ... again
Taipei — First they drove a car off a cliff. Then they tried to hang themselves. In their latest failed suicide bid, two Taiwanese lovers, Huang Pin-jen, 27, and Chang Shu-mei, 26, jumped hand-in-hand from the 12th floor of their hotel, but landed on the roof of a five-story restaurant. They are in a stable condition in hospital. A police spokesman said the couple's parents disapproved of their relationship, but had "agreed to settle their dispute with the young couple".

THE INDEPENDENT

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Kremlin boasts over Chechen chief's 'death'

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Russia's murky war in Chechnya was thrown into deeper confusion last night after a report that the rebel leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev, is dead.

The claim was circulated by the Itar-Tass agency. It said the general, whose 16-month battle with Russia has threatened Boris Yeltsin's presidency, was killed in a missile attack.

But Interfax news agency published a denial by the general's personal secretary, Saipudi Khasanov. He said the general was "working as usual".

Tass said his death was announced in Grozny by Khodzha-Ahmed Yarikhonov, one of Dudayev's top aides, after a Russian missile attack on a village, 18 miles south-west of Grozny. There was "no doubt" Dudayev was dead, he reportedly said. Tass later reported Mr

Yarikhonov as saying he had seen General Dudayev's body.

Last night, uncertainty surrounded the report, which gripped Moscow and Grozny. On the one hand, Tass has long been a conduit for official misinformation, and premature reports of General Dudayev's death have arisen before. On the other, specific details were emerging about the rocket attack, near Gekhi-Chu village, in which two of the general's senior aides died.

If true, supporters of Mr Yeltsin will present the killing of General Dudayev, who has been a thorn in the presidential hide since declaring Chechnya independent in 1991, as a triumph. Russia's President has refused to negotiate directly with him, calling him a "mad dog".

Whether it would deliver long-term dividends for the Kremlin is arguable. While it could lead to a bloody struggle

for leadership in the Chechens' ranks, it will also harden anti-Russian sentiment and prolong the conflict. "Any new leader would be expected to fight the Russians for some time before he earned the right from his followers to negotiate," said Alexander Iskandarian, a political analyst. "Otherwise he would be regarded as a traitor."

The death announcement followed fresh evidence that Mr Yeltsin's security officials are undermining his attempts to end the war. The latest to put his opposition on record is his national security adviser, Yuri Baturin. He described Mr Yeltsin's peace plan of 31 March, as "pre-mature", saying it would cost Russia "very dearly".

Russia's Defence Minister, General Pavel Grachev told the State Duma (parliament) last week he did not tell troops about the ceasefire until five days after it was supposed to

have come into effect. In what appears to have been an act of flagrant insubordination, General Grachev admitted issuing a secret order allowing the use of "frontal and army aviation".

The Russian commander in the region, General Vyacheslav Tikhomirov has also made clear his hostility to the plan.

The apparent defiance of Mr Yeltsin by his military chiefs – a mood which appears to have deepened after the death of at least 53 Russian troops in a Chechen ambush eight days ago – may explain the disparity between the President's words and his army's deeds in the last three weeks.

Mr Yeltsin has insisted the Russian military have carried out no actions in Chechnya since he announced the peace initiative on 31 March. Yet numerous reports show the aerial and artillery bombing of Chechen villages has continued.



Dead or alive: Dzhokhar Dudayev, whom Russia's state media claim was killed in a rocket attack near Grozny Photograph: AP

Estonians bemused by church split

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Tallinn

Among the spires and towers of Tallinn's medieval skyline, the golden onion-shaped domes of the Aleksander Nevsky cathedral appear strangely out of place. Despite its beauty, Estonians resent it. Architecturally, they say, it sticks out like a sore thumb. More irritatingly, it is a reminder of years under Russian and Soviet rule.

Moreover, its location opposite the national parliament is seen as pure provocation. Devotions have been particularly fervent following the celebration of the Orthodox Easter but they have also been tinged with fear, because of the decision earlier this year of a number of parishes to break away from the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow and place themselves under the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Those behind the move said it was simply a restoration of the situation that existed before the 1940 Soviet annexation and that, while they would now come under Constantinople, the more numerous Russian Orthodox believers would be free to stay with Moscow.

Legally, the new group was recognised as the legitimate successor of the pre-war Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, a tiny part of which had survived in exile in Stockholm. As such, it was then able to lay claim to all the church buildings and property which had subsequently been nationalised under Stalin, including the Aleksander Nevsky cathedral.

"We feel totally insecure about our long-term right to stay here," said Pavel Maskov, a cleric at the Aleksander Nevsky cathedral. "And we feel ashamed for our forefathers who built this church."

In an attempt to assuage ethnic Russian fears, the Estonian branch of the church has promised that Russian congregations will be able to remain indefinitely in the buildings they use. But for Mr Maskov that is not enough. "That could change any time. What long-term guarantees do we have?"

Although on one level the dispute boils down to property rights, it has wider ramifications. Within the Orthodox church it has opened a rift between Moscow and Constantinople compared by some to the Byzantine church's break from Rome in 1054.

The dispute has further damaged Estonia's relations with Russia, which interpreted the move as another attempt by a

hostile regime to curtail the rights of the country's large ethnic Russian community.

In a letter to his Estonian counterpart, Lennart Meri, the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, demanded "firm guarantees" that all Estonian parishes wishing to remain under the Moscow Patriarch would retain their property.

Aleksy II, the Russian Patriarch, clearly worried that the Estonian example could be copied elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, has accused his counterpart in Constantinople, Bartholomew I, of breaking canonical law and has taken the hostile step of deleting all references to him when he performs the liturgy in Moscow.

For many Estonians, it seems like a storm in a teacup. But then, in an ironic twist, the country is essentially Lutheran, not Orthodox.

Officials of the newly re-activated Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church admit their congregation has dwindled from a pre-war total of 200,000 to 20,000 mainly elderly believers. Rivals in the Russian camp say there are even fewer Estonian believers, while claiming membership of their own church to be 70,000.

Not in dispute is that the Orthodox faith was introduced to Estonia by Russia in the 11th century and that, during the more than 200 years the country was under tsarist rule, there was a concerted attempt to convert the population.

With the exception of the brief inter-war period of Estonian independence, the country's Orthodox community has traditionally come under the Moscow Patriarch.

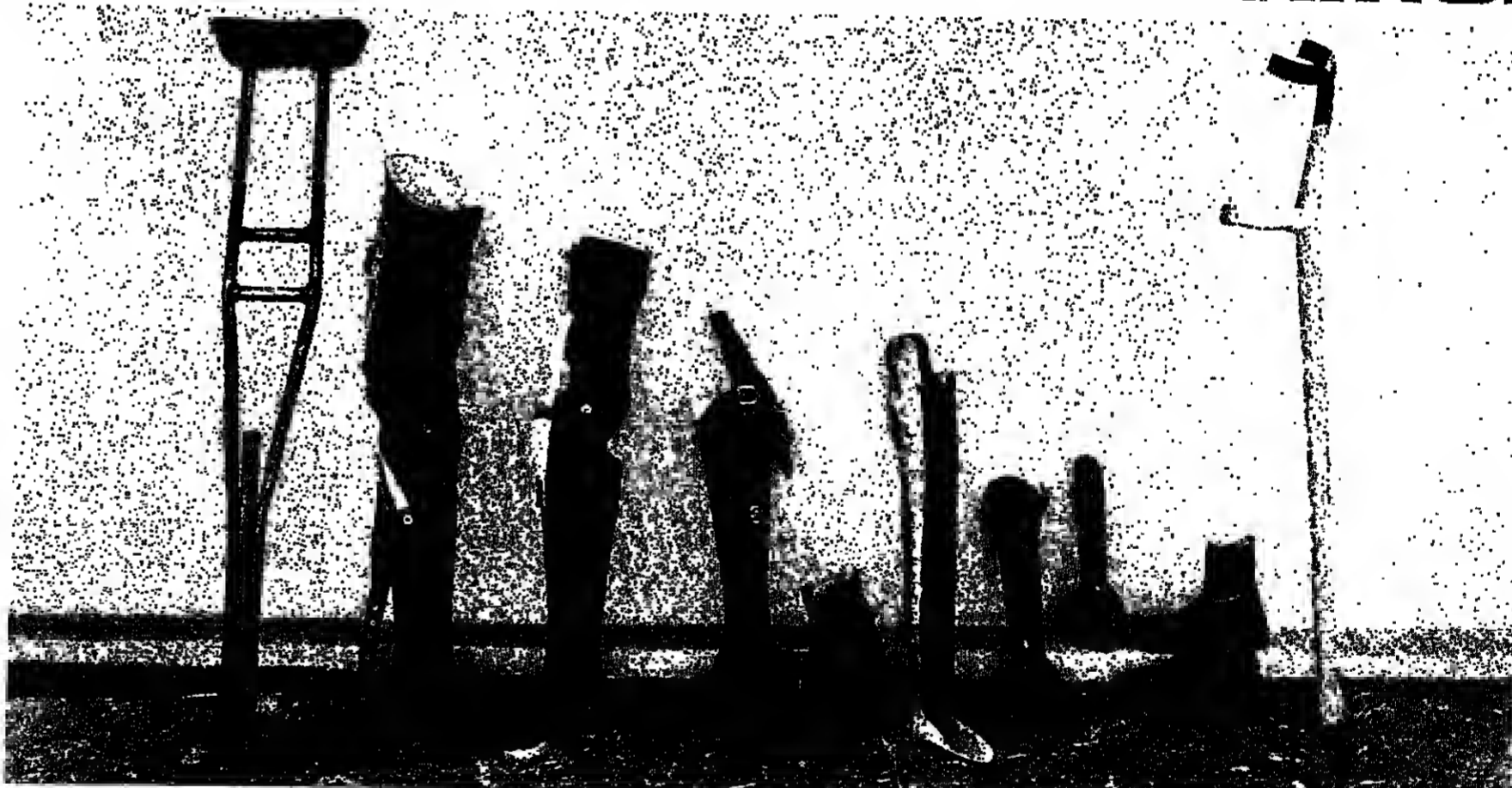
Between 1923 and 1940, however, it was under the jurisdiction of Constantinople.

Ethnic Russian believers say that, as they now form the majority within the Orthodox community, they should determine who should have jurisdiction of the church and who, therefore, owns its property.

Activists on the Estonian side insist their action is not aimed against Russian believers, but forms part of the wider process of erasing the unjust consequences of Soviet rule. They also say it is simply a matter of feeling more comfortable under Constantinople.

After all the years of political, social, economic and theological control from Moscow, Estonian Orthodox believers no longer felt comfortable within a Russian-controlled institution that they still believe to be riddled with KGB agents.

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LANDMINES MUST BE STOPPED

Balkan paper sues Swiss over spy claim

Bucharest (Reuters) — A sensational Romanian newspaper says it is suing the Swiss Foreign Ministry for calling one of its reporters a spy. "Evenimentul Zilei" sued the Swiss Foreign Ministry "the paper screamed". Last week, Switzerland said it had withdrawn Jean-Pierre Vetrovaglia, 49, its married ambassador to Bucharest, because of his relationship with a 21-year-old "Evenimentul Zilei" (News Day) political reporter, Floriana Jucan. "Miss Jucan is an employee of the Romanian

espionage service, and her relationship with the Swiss ambassador therefore posed a security risk to Switzerland," the Foreign Ministry said.

"Evenimentul Zilei's" editor, Ion Cristoiu, denied this, saying: "The Swiss statement damaged the newspaper". Court officials confirmed the suit, which seeks token damages of just one lei (a fraction of 1p), had been lodged. Ms Jucan says she had a relationship with the ambassador, but denies working for the security service.

international

Italian right knocked off course

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

The leaders of the National Alliance, Italy's reformed neo-fascist party, will be licking some painful wounds today when they meet to confront the harsh reality of last Sunday's election: not only that they lost, in coalition with Silvio Berlusconi's more moderate Forza Italia movement, but that their hopes of becoming the natural party of the mainstream right have suffered a major, if not fatal, blow.

Two years after the party came out of the wilderness and into government in Mr Berlusconi's shortlived administration, it is finding the path to respectability far tougher than it anticipated. Its leader, Gianfranco Fini, has won a reputation as the wildest politician in Italy, but he failed to translate that into the breakthrough he was looking for. The National Alliance scored 15 per cent – an improvement of just 1.5 points on 1994, when the party was still avowedly fascist, and well short of the 20 per cent that opinion polls were forecasting.

It was Mr Fini who provoked Sunday's election, against the will of Mr Berlusconi and the rest of the centre-right, by pulling out of all-party talks on constitutional reform in February. Clearly, he was calculating on either a snap victory for the centre-right, or at least a leap for his party to overtake Mr Berlusconi and transform the neo-fascists into an Italian version of Jacques Chirac's Gaullist movement in France.

He was wrong on both counts. Most disappointing for his modernisation drive was the fact that the diehard fascists in his movement did well – for example Teodoro Buontempo, from the southern suburbs of Rome – while the so-called moderate candidates close to Mr Fini only scraped into parliament.

Mr Fini's number three, a former streetfighter called Maurizio Gasparri, lost in his Rome constituency and had to be "fished back" in the part of the election decided by proportional representation.

The National Alliance leader was unrepentant for the electoral slaughter in his own ranks, saying he regretted nothing. "They'll say it was my fault we lost because I wanted to go the polls. It will become a national sport, but there are no grounds to suggest such a thing," he said. Instead Mr Fini turned his anger on his old rival in the neo-fascist movement, Pino Rauti, who refused to join him at last year's congress that broke with the blackshirt past, and put up opposing candidates in 40 constituencies.

Mr Rauti's party split the right-wing vote in several marginal seats, including the historic centre of Rome.

Criticism of Mr Fini has been particularly strong in the moderate, Catholic wing of the centre-right, where one unsuccessful candidate, the former labour minister Clemente Mastella, blamed his defeat in Benevento, near Naples, on a Fini-inspired conspiracy. In similar vein one of Mr Berlusconi's candidates, the lawyer Carlo Thomma, said he lost his seat in Rome because the National Alliance faithful did not back him.

Discontent in the ranks of the centre-right is growing by the day, and it is probably only a matter of time before the first rifts emerge. Mr Berlusconi has insisted he will remain leader of the opposition, but few believe he has either the will or the authority to take the centre-right into the next general election.

Yesterday the former prime minister was suggesting thousands of his sides' votes were fraudulently discounted as spoiled ballots. The accusation was ignored by the prime minister-designate, Romano Prodi, who vowed to keep his government in office for the full five years.

Historians battle over Clovis, first French king

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

An event due to take place in five months, commemorating another event that may or not have taken place 1,500 years ago, is causing a rumpus in academic, political and religious circles in France and reopening wounds thought to have been healed long ago.

At the centre of all the fuss are plans to celebrate the 1,500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis, a warlord from the Merovingian tribe who, in the fifth century, became the first king of France.

There is no doubt that all the stops are being pulled out. On 22 September, the Pope is to celebrate the commemorative Mass at Rheims cathedral where Clovis was baptised, and where the baptism is being given an expensive facelift. A state committee, headed by the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, will oversee the celebrations: numerous conferences, television programmes and books are in the pipeline.

Which is where the problems start, for it is not clear that there is an anniversary to celebrate. A television discussion in France last week had leading historians engaging in a verbal brawl, with raised voices and some very unacademic language, over the traditional date of the baptism: 13 April 496.

The only consensus seemed to be that if Clovis was baptised and if the baptism took place at Rheims, it was not in the year 496 and certainly not in September. The year, apparently, depends on the year from which Clovis's reign dates, which may be two, three or more years later than the date accepted by 17th-century historians. These same historians are also accused of changing the season of his baptism from Christmas to Easter on the grounds that Easter was more appropriate.

So why will France celebrate the event on 22 September 1996? The simplest explanation is that this is when the Pope's programme enabled him to come to France. But sticklers for the constitutional separation of church and state in France divide a more sinister reason: 22 September is Republic Day in France. They see the coincidence as a deliberate attempt to link the baptism of France's first king with the inauguration of the French state.

But it is the association of state leaders with the anniversary – with the formation of the Clovis committee and the likely attendance of President Chirac at the Rheims Mass – that has raised most hackles.

The separation of church and state, though enshrined in the constitution only in 1902, is taken for granted in France as one of the achievements of the 1789 Revolution. Since he came to office, however, Mr Chirac has caused eyebrows to be raised on this score.

The most notable blurring of the division between church and state was his decision to arrange a Requiem Mass at Notre Dame for his predecessor, François Mitterrand, a very public agnostic. But Mr Chirac is also the first post-war president to have made a state visit to the Vatican: he took a personal interest in the election of the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger, into the Académie Française, and has been criticised for referring to France as the "faithful daughter of the church".

As the highly sensitive debate over the association of the Clovis anniversary with a Papal Mass and the foundation of the French state progressed, two further difficulties arose. The first was a public commemoration of the 13 April anniversary by a group of traditionalist Catholic clerics and the extreme-right National Front.

A ringing address from the National Front leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, and a torch-lit procession in Paris in honour of France's first Christian king, led to accusations that the extreme right was trying to undo 1789 and co-opt Clovis as a national symbol, rather than as a successful co-opted Joan of Arc.

The second difficulty was the discovery by an American archaeologist that the Rheims baptism could not have been the site of Clovis's baptism, because it was not built at the time. Remains of a far more primitive baptism were found beneath the crypt, but were in no condition to be restored.

Drowned by the hubbub of protest over aspects of the Clovis anniversary are murmurings about not letting the controversies get out of hand. Marking the baptism of Clovis, these voices argue, is just another way of saying that France is a very ancient nation and making the French feel a little happier. But with five months to go and historians going at it hammer and tongs, such sweet reason looks unlikely to prevail.

Paraguay general menaces president

PHIL DAVISON
Latin America Correspondent

For Paraguayans, it was like the old days: a general telling a civilian politician to step aside. And all of South America, still honeymooning with democracy after a history of military rulers, was following the drama out of more than curiosity.

South America's youngest democracy appeared under serious threat yesterday as Paraguay's army commander, Lino Oviedo, challenged the leadership of President Juan Carlos Wasmosy. Gen Oviedo, a populist with a strong following among the nation's poverty-stricken peasants, was barricaded with 4,000 men in a barracks on the edge of the capital, Asunción. He was refusing to accept his forced retirement, ostensibly for meddling in politics, and in turn demanding the President's resignation.

By last night the navy, air force and police had announced support for the President. Although there was no sign of military activity by either side, tension was high. Gen Oviedo has not so far threatened a coup or any other armed action, but has called on Mr Wasmosy to step down in favour of the Senate speaker, Rafael Ángel Filizola Casabianca.

The general, who helped lead the 1989 coup which ended



General Oviedo: Challenge

However, the conflict between Mr Wasmosy and Gen Oviedo may simply be personal. The general was widely perceived to have helped Mr Wasmosy win the nomination as presidential candidate for the Colorado Party in 1993.

In turn, the new president promoted the general from commander of the First Army Corps to overall army commander. A 1993 statement by the general, saying the armed forces would "co-govern Paraguay for centuries and centuries", suggested to most Paraguayans that Mr Wasmosy would have to rule largely in the military's shadow.

Last month, after tens of thousands of peasants marched through Asunción to protest against Mr Wasmosy's free-market economic policies, Gen Oviedo left no doubt he hoped to run for president as Colorado Party candidate in 1998.

It was after the general sought to postpone a party convention due next weekend that Mr Wasmosy ordered him on Monday to retire.

The general's supporters believe the President had an ulterior motive. Just last week, pro-Oviedo legislators blocked the government's attempts to award two lucrative toll-bridge contracts to companies in which Mr Wasmosy is believed to have major financial interests.



Building hope: A man surveys damage in Nedjarić, a former Sarajevo frontline suburb. The international community has pledged to find £800m for Bosnian reconstruction

Tyler Moore joins crusade against cruel 'urine farms'

DAVID USBORNE
New York

American animal rights groups have stepped up efforts to close down so-called "urine farms" in North America where hapless pregnant mares are exploited for the production of a hormone replacement drug for women.

Animal rights groups say about 80,000 pregnant mares are confined on short leashes in concrete stalls for months at a time on ranches in North Dakota and Canada, to allow their urine to be collected for the production of the drug Premarin by the Canadian pharmaceutical giant, Wyeth-Ayerst.

The latest weapon in the campaign against the company is a video made by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the best-known animal rights group in America, which highlights the cruel treatment of the mares. The video is presented by the actress, Mary Tyler Moore.

"I was appalled when I heard unofficially several years ago about what Premarin is," she said. Premarin – the name is derived from Pregnant Mares' Urine – is an oestrogen supplement for women in menopause seeking to fend off heart disease and osteoporosis, the thinning of the bones.

Among the complaints of PETA is that the horses suffer discomfort from rubber collection devices attached to their haunches and are deprived of water, to ensure that their urine is concentrated. A spokeswoman for Wyeth-Ayerst insisted the company regularly dispatches inspectors to ensure the proper treatment of the animals. "It is in our best interest for these animals to be treated well," Marilyn Rhudy said.

The company has been making Premarin for almost 50 years. An estimated 8 million women around the world take it as a hormone supplement.

This week in



THE INDEPENDENT

This week and every week, Section Two has a new look, with more pages, new features, a daily radio column and an expanded listings section providing Britain's most comprehensive daily guide to going out.

on Monday

A new regular section, Family Life, that deals with the interests and problems of parents and children. Julie Myerson's column also focuses on home life. Plus: a new series – Do we need? – which challenges the icons of modern Britain. And, every Monday unrivalled coverage of the expanding world of information technology in our Network pull-out section.

on Tuesday

Health: how wearing a virtual reality helmet could help cure phobias and other psychological problems. Plus: flaky nails are not simply a problem for the vain

and in Sport

A 24-page tabloid section with all the action from the weekend's sporting action. Plus: the Monday interview in which a leading figure comes under the microscope, an unbeatable results service, gossip, speculation and fact from behind the scenes and the best in sports photography.

on Wednesday

Bridget Jones's diary continues to chronicle the encounters and exquisite embarrassments in the life of Britain's most-read spinster. Plus: the midweek travel section, your money, finance

and law. In our back pages, Martin Newell, Britain's leading rock poet, and Neil Kerber, one of the country's funniest cartoonists, present their views of the modern world.

on Thursday

All our regular features, including Virginia Ironside's Dilemmas, John Walsh's column, plus film, education

and graduate plus. In the back pages, William Hartston's history of the world in 10 1/2 inches

on Friday

24Seven – a new 20-page pull-out-and-keep entertainment and listings section. Including a complete day-by-day planner for the week ahead, plus

seven-day TV, radio and satellite listings, ticket offers and informed comment on the week's highlights. Plus: eight pages of pop and classical music



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FOR MORE INFO

China prepares to give Yeltsin warm welcome

TERESA POOLE
Peking
and TONY BARBER

In May 1989, as thousands of pro-democracy activists demonstrated in Tiananmen Square, Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in Peking for the first Sino-Soviet summit in three decades. For the Chinese, the visit proved the biggest diplomatic embarrassment in the history of the People's Republic.

Mr Gorbachev was sneaked in through the back door of the Great Hall of the People, and ate his banquet in a room with curtains drawn.

Today, President Boris Yeltsin arrives in China on a visit that reflects increasingly friendly Sino-Russian relations at a time when both countries have bones to pick with the United States. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Shen Guofang, said yesterday the visit would "inject new vitality" into the relationship.

However, suspicions remain between the two and there is no chance Mr Yeltsin's trip will result in the creation of a formal Sino-Russian security axis.

The Russian President is visiting Peking and Shanghai only a week after President Bill Clinton



Yeltsin: Shares concerns with China over US 'interference'

went to Japan to reaffirm the US-Japanese security relationship and promise that US troops would stay in Asia as long as they were wanted.

Mr Yeltsin's visit will enable Russia and China to show that they, too, can cultivate close ties, while also illustrating limits to the Sino-Russian relationship.

For the Chinese, one welcome aspect of Mr Yeltsin's trip is that, unlike western countries, Russia feels no obligation to raise issues such as Taiwan and Tibet. "One of the major reasons for the good atmosphere is the 1,000 per cent non-interference in internal matters,"

said a senior Russian diplomat. Nor is Mr Yeltsin's presidential election fight against the Russian Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, likely to affect talks. "The Chinese do not like to see communists lose power, but they separate ideological preferences from state politics and inter-state relations," the diplomat said.

More than 25 years of confrontation between Moscow and Peking gave way to a thaw in the late 1980s, and relations have steadily flourished since despite China's nominal adherence to a Communist doctrine abandoned by Russia.

The good atmosphere will be in evidence in Shanghai on Friday when Mr Yeltsin, President Jiang Zemin of China and the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan sign a treaty on confidence-building measures along their borders.

The sense of Sino-Russian solidarity is enhanced by the fact that both Russia and China have entered a difficult period in their relations with the US. Russia's vehement opposition to Nato's expansion into eastern Europe is matched by Chinese resentment at US policies on Taiwan.

However, while exploiting



Kings of the castle: Russian border guards stand on a fort blown up last year to relieve tensions on the Chinese border. Local protests against plans to move the border are one of the few difficult items on the agenda for Boris Yeltsin's visit to Peking. Photograph: Dmitry Ancha/Reuters

the propaganda potential of Mr Yeltsin's visit, China also accepts there are limits to playing a "Russian card" against Washington. The Russian diplomat, commenting on his meetings with Chinese officials, said: "There are no facts that make me think China is using us in a game with the US."

Still, not everything is sweetness and light between Russia and China. Earlier this month, officials in Russia's Primorsky region on the Pacific coast protested loudly at the way in which a disputed part of the Russian-Chinese border was being demarcated.

Major-General Valery Rozov,

the head of the Russian team marking out part of the frontier, even resigned in anger over what he called the "transfer of Russian territory to China".

Mr Yeltsin may also not get much joy if he tries to persuade Chinese leaders to let Russia join talks on tensions in the Korean peninsula. The US wants

the talks limited to China, the two Korean states and itself, and there are few signs China is keen to see Russian involvement.

There also appear to be differences over a complete ban on nuclear weapons tests. China has refrained from supporting a worldwide ban but at a summit on nuclear security in

Moscow last week Mr Yeltsin offered at least partial endorsement of a global test ban.

However, the overall political climate of Mr Yeltsin's visit should be warm. A "hot line" telephone link will be set up between the countries and several major economic agreements should be signed.

What chance for a country plundered by its peace-keepers?

"Every car or moveable object gone" has long been the Liberian epithet for the West African peace-keeping force, Ecomog.

First deployed in August 1990 to restore order in the capital, Ecomog has been accused both of taking sides and of taking part in looting. Many observers feel the Nigerian domination of the force has been the decisive factor in its failure to carry out its mission. As one Liberian said: "Would you ask the Nigerian military to mount a peace-keeping operation in your country?"

Liberia

THE WAR AT THE END OF THE WORLD

When the civil war reached Monrovia in July 1990, the reaction of most foreigners was to get out as quickly as possible. The United States, in spite of its cultural and commercial ties with Liberia, was reluctant to commit its own troops, and encouraged the efforts of Ecomog, the economic grouping of West African states, to find a regional solution. The US also provided political support, military intelligence, and funding for Ecomog.

The Organisation of African Unity and the UN have praised the regional effort, and the force has been seen as a model for African attempts to resolve its own problems.

But Ecomog was compromised from the start by Nigerian leadership. Nigeria, which has provided all the generals and up to two-thirds of the troops, has always been opposed

to Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Fearing that Ivory Coast's support for the NPFL was an attempt to further francophone interests in the region, Nigeria saw control of Ecomog as a chance to impose its own agenda in Liberia. Ecomog began to operate covertly against the NPFL in 1991, through its assistance to the rival Ulimo movement in

western Liberia. Its neutral status was finally abandoned in November 1992, when it openly allied itself with the new factions in an all-out attack on the NPFL. All the new factions - Ulimo, AFL and LPC - have been associated with Ecomog, and all have been responsible for appalling atrocities. Charles Taylor has consistently refused to disarm to Ecomog, calling for a small UN force to monitor the

process. "It is not possible for us to disarm to anyone who is shooting at us," he said. Evidence of the dubious business activities of Ecomog was exposed in 1995, when the US State Department's annual human rights report accused the force of "systematic looting", even of "entire buildings for scrap to be sold abroad". An informant suggested also that one reason Ecomog sealed the

Liberian borders in late-1992 was to gain control of the lucrative arms and drugs trade along the coast. According to an EU official in Monrovia, the commercial interests of the Nigerians and their lack of respect for humanitarian operations have created "such a generalised distrust of Ecomog that the war will never be over until they leave". The Cotonou agreement of

July 1993 recognised some of the ambiguities of the force, but failed to address them. A small UN observer force was assembled in late-1993, but has so far played no role in the conflict. Without such controls, Nigerian interests in Liberia continue to provide a lucrative source of income for soldiers on the ground and the junta back home. Peace-keeping is a difficult and dangerous job at the best of times. But if the peace-keepers themselves cannot maintain an integrity and neutrality, it is doomed to failure.

In the third of our series, Philippa Atkinson hears a grim tale



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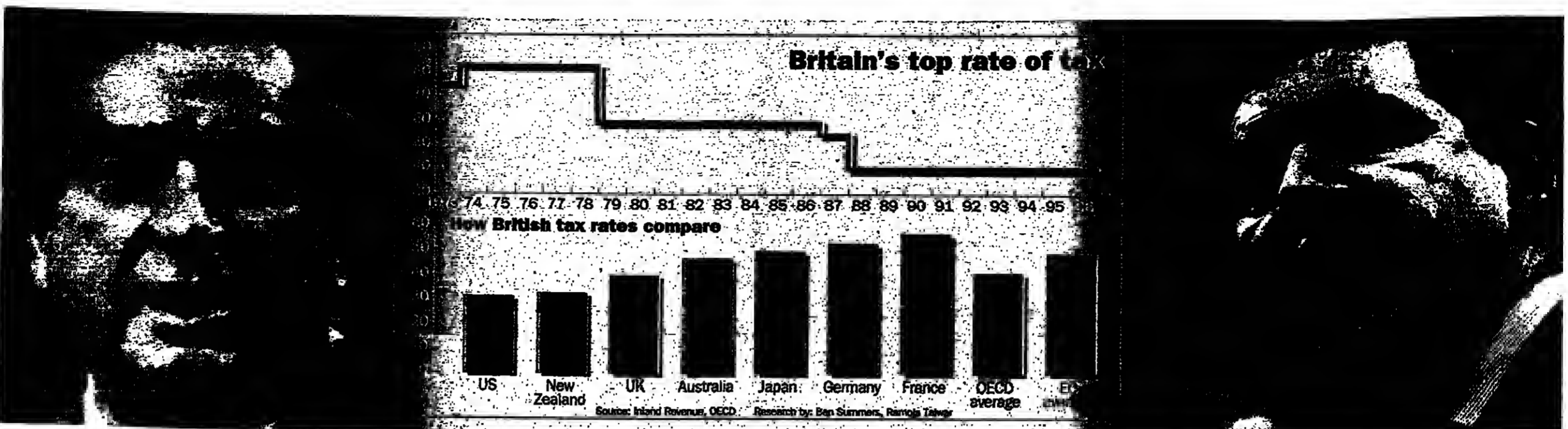
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How much will Labour tax you?

Gordon Brown is playing it close to his chest when it comes to his plans should he become Chancellor. Hamish McRae weighs up the options on taxation, spending and borrowing that he would be most likely to consider



Stand back from the squabbles between the leadership and the rank and file over the detail of Labour's economic platform. Stand back, too, from the inevitable ambiguities that remain over tax and spending policies, for as Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, made clear yesterday, clarification will presumably not come until the campaign itself.

To understand what a Labour government might do to your taxes, start instead with three seismic shifts in economics since Labour last held power in 1979.

First, the dominance of the market system. Then, as the World Bank recently noted, about 40 per cent of the world's population lived in a functioning market economy; now the proportion is something like 90 per cent.

Second, the transformation in global inflation. There were two peaks of inflation, in 1975-76 and in the early Eighties. Before those, the long-term trend was up; since then it has been down. Government no longer has a choice about how much inflation might be acceptable; any rise is immediately "punished" by a rise in long-term interest rates.

Third, within the developed world there is increasing scepticism about the effectiveness of public spending as a means of achieving social aims. In most countries, this has yet to be reflected in a decline in public spending as a proportion of GDP, but in some (the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, New Zealand as well as the UK) there is a clear downward trend. In the UK, this trend was started by the last Labour chancellor, Denis Healey.

In this context, Labour is clearest about its attitude towards public spending and borrowing. Gordon Brown has committed a future Labour government to two rules. The first, which he calls the "golden rule" of borrowing, is that it will only borrow for investment, not for consumption. The second is that the ratio of public debt will be stable and kept "at a prudent and sensible level".

The first rule is open to wide interpretation, for "investment" is a word frequently used to cover what is in any accounting

sense current spending, for example, investment in education. But the second, if adhered to, should contain any rise in borrowing to the rate of growth of the economy as a whole; this would suggest a budget deficit averaging about 2.5 per cent of GDP, well within the Maastricht ceiling of 3 per cent and substantially lower than the deficit over the life of the present Parliament.

Yet this fiscal prudence does not tell us much about the size of the public sector under Labour. For that we need to look at taxation. The most important institutional change would be the introduction of a Green Budget, for discussion of tax changes, several months before the Budget itself.

Mr Brown has suggested an income tax system that will reduce the tax burden on the low-paid and middle-income earners but will almost certainly increase tax rates of the higher earners. His suggestion (as a long-term objective) is that income tax will start at a lower band of 10 per cent, instead of the present 20 per cent, and move upwards in steps. The present top rate of 40 per cent will presumably be increased, but what that rate will be and the level of income at which it starts have not been disclosed.

Last week's spat over Clare Short's remarks that someone at her income level should be prepared to pay more tax suggests that any higher rate over and above the 40 per cent band would not start until an income of perhaps £40,000. But even that level would catch a lot of people. John Prescott has admitted that many would pay more tax under Labour.

Some further clarification here comes from Tony Blair. He has made two important statements on tax. One is that Britain's top tax rates will be internationally competitive. The other is that he recognises that

Brown's Budget plans at a glance

- New income tax higher rate: 45 per cent
- Payable on income over £40,000
- Government borrowing to be cut to average 2.5 per cent of GDP
- Interest rate policy unchanged
- Incentives for long-term saving
- VAT unchanged but cut for domestic fuel
- Corporate tax under review
- Public spending virtually unchanged



Tomorrow
Does new Labour's conversion to the market mean it has jettisoned its commitment to equality?
Yvette Cooper on Labour's most troubling dilemma

many professionals – for example, in the financial services business – are mobile; securing these activities in the UK requires appropriate taxation. It is not at all clear what "being competitive" means. If it means being competitive by European standards, it would suggest an increase in the top rate to perhaps 50 per cent. If it means being competitive with East Asia and the United States, it would leave very little scope for a tax rise at all, which seems unlikely.

A clever policy might be to hold the rise in top rates below 50 per cent, say to 45 per cent. That would be below that of the large European Union countries and, allowing for state and local taxes, not much higher than the United States.

But income tax isn't the only personal tax that is likely to rise. Gordon Brown has strongly attacked Conservative aims to abolish both capital gains tax and inheritance tax. The rules on both may be tightened. Yet

there will also be tax incentives that may benefit the well off. Mr Brown has committed a Labour government to further incentives for saving. Present PEPs and TESSAs seem likely to be maintained, and probably supplemented by some kind of individual savings account, which would be encouraged by tax concessions, paid after a qualifying period.

On indirect taxation, there are few clues. Mr Brown says that he would like to see a cut in VAT on fuel, but that would presumably apply only to fuel used in the home. It would be consistent with the tone of his approach for there to be higher taxation on any polluting activities, including road transport. Increasing VAT seems unlikely.

On company taxation, less is known, though the forthcoming corporate tax review will clarify things. One of the few specific suggestions is a windfall tax on the profits of public utilities, and Brown has criticised the use of offshore companies to escape taxation. There are words of encouragement for

small and medium-sized businesses as creators of jobs, so it is unlikely that taxes on them will rise.

So where do these calculations on tax and borrowing leave us on public spending? In practice, the level of spending will be limited by the available revenues. If the taxation principles above are adhered to, they will create little additional revenue. There will be few bonuses from further privatisation as that cupboard is bare. Add in that fact and it is quite possible that a Labour government which intends to stick to its principles would have to tighten fiscal policy; public spending in future might be lower than it is now, however surprising a conclusion that may seem. Two things are likely to happen to public spending: it is likely to be redirected towards low-income families, and there will be a drive for better value for money.

Further, there will be a drive for better value for money in public spending. Mr Blair has praised a speech by Sir Geoffrey Holland, former permanent secretary at the Department of Education, now Vice-Chancellor at Exeter University, who argued that there could be a 30 per cent improvement in the education system within existing budgets.

Expect more of the same on interest rates, although Labour has pledged to give the Bank of England more independence, while making the way it sets monetary policy more open and accountable. The solidity of Labour's commitment to a single currency is not clear, but, in practice, policy seems slightly less hostile than that of the present government.

Criticism of Labour's economic platform from the right has generally followed a predictable line: new Labour is really old Labour with a more agreeable face, that when push comes to shove it will be a tax

and spend, anti-business government. Behind this is the idea that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown will not be able to keep full control of economic policy, and the old, and still very evident, instincts of the rest of the party will dominate. This is a legitimate concern. Tony Blair adopts a completely different tone – particularly when he is speaking abroad – from those of his colleagues, including members of the Shadow Cabinet. It is almost as though they see two different worlds.

My own view, though, is not to be too concerned about this, not just because of the Blair/Brown dominance of the party, but more because the practical reality is that there is no alternative to the model now accepted by the leadership. Any straying from fiscal and monetary orthodoxy will be punished with swift ferocity. A Labour government will be given less benefit of the doubt than a Tory one. This is perhaps unfair but inevitable because of the legacy of distrust in the business and financial community.

My greater concern is that expectations of what a Labour government might achieve in economic policy run far beyond any conceivable reality. Gordon Brown's belief that changing economic policies will lead to higher growth is, at best, extremely optimistic. Tony Blair's belief that improved education will lead to greater prosperity has long-term merit, but it could take 10 or 20 years.

So much of the political debate in Britain presumes that the economic policies we adopt here are of great importance. Viewed from outside, they are not. It is a typical medium-sized economy with some strengths and some weaknesses. The UK is part of what inevitably will be a slow-growth zone in Europe, but it benefits from being one of the most outward-looking of the European economies. It can be nudged helpfully by appropriate government action, but all one can really ask for is reasonable competence.

That we may get from Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. But if we expect anything more, I fear we will be gravely disappointed.

Leaving the trains and the strains

I hear that Roger Salmon (below), who recently announced that he will be resigning as head of the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising in October, is planning a period of convalescence.

It seems that the strain of organising the sell-off of British Rail's passenger services for the past three years and dealing with the Labour transport spokeswoman Clare Short, who politely called him "a rat leaving the sinking ship", has convinced him of the merits of monastic life. When he leaves his post in October, the former Rothschild director is going to spend a month on a course of meditation.

Patron of the arts, no questions asked

High morals at the high tables of Oxford. But a more pragmatic approach is being adopted at the London Symphony Orchestra.

Earlier this month, Clive Gillingham, who has been pointing out the college had been pointing out with some asperity that his grandfather, for whom the chair was named, had been a Nazi employer of slave labour. Happily for music lovers, however, the LSO is less troubled by such ethical matters.

The orchestra is to take on the winner of a young conductors' com-

petition, held at the Barbican in London tomorrow, as an assistant conductor. It is a prestigious, biennial event – its patron is the Prince of Wales, and the jury boasts many distinguished musical names, including the conductor, Daniel Barenboim. The occasion is being financed by the striking Donatella Flick, the society spouse of Geri-Rudolph, awarding £15,000 to the winner out of her own pocket.

Described variously as "dazzling" and "daffy", Donatella is renowned for her ambitions as a patron of the arts. Doubtless, her husband's recent academic rebuff caused much distress, but she need have no fears with the LSO.

"I haven't the faintest idea where her money comes from," declared a lofty Clive Gillingham, managing director of the LSO. "And quite honestly, that's all there is to say about it." Not a Balliol man, clearly.

What are they talking about?
So those old-fashioned parents in the Shires were right after all. You really can't understand a word those pop groups are singing. It is as if they say: official. For the first time, even a rock concert is to have opera-style surtitles. The surviving members of The Who will perform their 1973 rock opera, *Quadrophenia*, at an all-star concert in Hyde Park on 29 June in aid of the Prince's Trust on a bill including Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton. And, Pete Townshend, composer of *Quadrophenia*, says he will be having surtitles so that those attending can follow the story. Myself, I always found Roger Daltrey's vocals completely intelligible. Now, surtitles for Bob Dylan – that could be quite helpful.

Mad cows in the Saudi silly season

Anyone who thinks there has been sensationalist reporting of the "mad cow disease" story here should read the front page lead story of the *Saudi Gazette*, the English language newspaper of Saudi Arabia. It starts with ironic lyricism: "Over the centuries, a green land of luxuriant herbage and a healthy livestock nourished the legend that beef as much as beer was a national birthright of Britons. It may now be killing, not ennobling hearts but rotting brains... The butchers in the entire continent have displayed boards on their shops that British beef is not sold there, so that they may smoothly continue getting on with their business, luring the already hesitant customers."

Thus into its stride the *Saudi Gazette*



continues in forceful if lateral fashion: "On the other hand, 60,000 Muslim women's flesh was administered by Serbian butchers and the heinous crime was video-recorded and sold at all British video shops at £1,000 per cassette. The shopkeepers displayed the boards on their shops indicating that those cassettes are sold at their shops just to lure the sex-thirsty customers belonging to the Jewish and Christian communities."

I hope there is no Saudi equivalent phrase for "it must be true, it's in the papers".

Cliff is taken for a ride in Dublin

Sir Clifford Richard is finding that *Heathcliff The Musical* is a hazardous business. Having already banned the critics from his forthcoming portrayal of Emily Brontë's hero, Sir Clifford, I gather, has now found that this acting lark has dangers even worse than critics – directors.

Frank Dunlop, the former head of the Edinburgh Festival who is directing *Heathcliff*, has been rehearsing with Sir Clifford in Dublin. Needing to go across town, Dunlop, forgetting for a moment that his leading actor is rather better known than some of his leading actors of yesteryear, took an astonished Sir Clifford on the top of a bus. Within minutes he was mobbed by crowds thinking it was a remake of *Summer Holiday* – the 1960s film where Cliff Richard and friends took a double-decker across Europe.

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Defeating the class enemy

What on earth do you do with a child who is just too difficult for teachers to cope with? Richard Wilding, a 13-year-old boy in a Nottingham comprehensive, has just provoked the entire teaching staff at his school into threatening strike action – just to get him to stay off the premises. Teaching other children in his class has become increasingly difficult. Teachers have been threatened and felt their safety was in danger. It is impossible not to have sympathy for them. They were threatening to strike for the sake of all the other children at the school. Yet Richard Wilding has to be taught somewhere, his parents think it would be best for him to stay in the school he knows and if he went to another school wouldn't that be just passing on the problem rather than solving it?

The troubling thing is that Richard Wilding is not an isolated example. One of the teaching unions, the NAS/UNITE, was involved in 52 cases last year in which staff refused to teach a difficult child; the numbers are growing. The number of children expelled in England has risen from 11,000 to an estimated 15,000 in just two years. All these excluded and expelled children are circulating in the system somewhere – perhaps spinning through another comprehensive, perhaps sidelined into a special school, or perhaps dropping out altogether. Disturbed and difficult as they may be, they can't just be kicked out on to the streets. Such a policy pursued over many years would have disastrous social consequences. The local education authority has an obligation to educate them. Another comprehensive is unlikely to solve the problem – unless the new school has additional resources and expertise to cope with the problem. Often they don't.

Special schools – or special units used in conjunction with mainstream schools – do at least have more resources

to cope with the particular problems of each child. They give classmates and teachers a welcome respite from the trouble. But for many children, isolating them from the socialising effects of more balanced peers may not be the best solution.

Yet there are other people involved here, beyond the troubled child and his parents. When one of their 30 classmates is extremely disruptive, the education of 29 other children is jeopardised. If – as is often the case in difficult inner-city comprehensives – other pupils have learning difficulties and behavioural problems too, the entire class can be destabilised by the anarchic actions of one child. Excluding the most impossible children may be the only way to give the others any chance of an education.

It may also be the only way for teachers and a school to enforce discipline. When teachers decide a child should be kicked out, the governors or local authority appeals board who contemplate overturning their decision should be aware that they risk undermining the authority of the entire school disciplinary system. As a general rule, teachers need support and backing in the disciplinary decisions they make, in the interests of every other child at that school.

The solution found in the Wilding case has some merits. He will remain at the school but with a special teacher and home tuition. Many parents will wonder why the most disruptive pupils should be rewarded with such lavish resources. Yet the reality is that more resources will have to be devoted to these cases, ideally by providing more specialised teaching within schools, to safeguard the interests of the rest of the school and offer some hope of making the most disruptive pupils more manageable.

Israel's road to nowhere

Under the stated aims of Israel's "controlled" offensive in southern Lebanon to hit Hizbollah missile sites, a law-abiding Lebanese citizen should have the right to drive in peace along the road connecting his nation's principal cities. He does so today at the risk of being blown to pieces by an Israeli naval shell.

For several days in succession, two Israeli gunboats, cruising just off the Lebanese shore, have lobbed high explosives at cars and trucks passing along the only highway connecting Beirut with the cities of Sidon and Tyre. Yesterday, they fired at a car 25 miles south of Beirut, forcing it off the road and injuring its driver. On Monday, two cars were knocked off the road north of Sidon and their drivers seriously hurt. In another incident, a shell landed close to an ambulance, which swerved and injured a pedestrian.

None of these incidents compare with the horrific, accidental shelling of the UN base at Qana last week in which 120 Lebanese refugees died. Nor do the activities of the gunboats compare with Hizbollah's prolonged rocket bombardment of villages in northern Israel.

But this is a very odd kind of naval engagement: saloon cars versus 500 ton, fast-attack gunboats with rapid-firing 76mm and 20mm cannons. They have all occurred north of Sidon: well north of the area of operations delineated by Israel when it launched its offensive. One con-

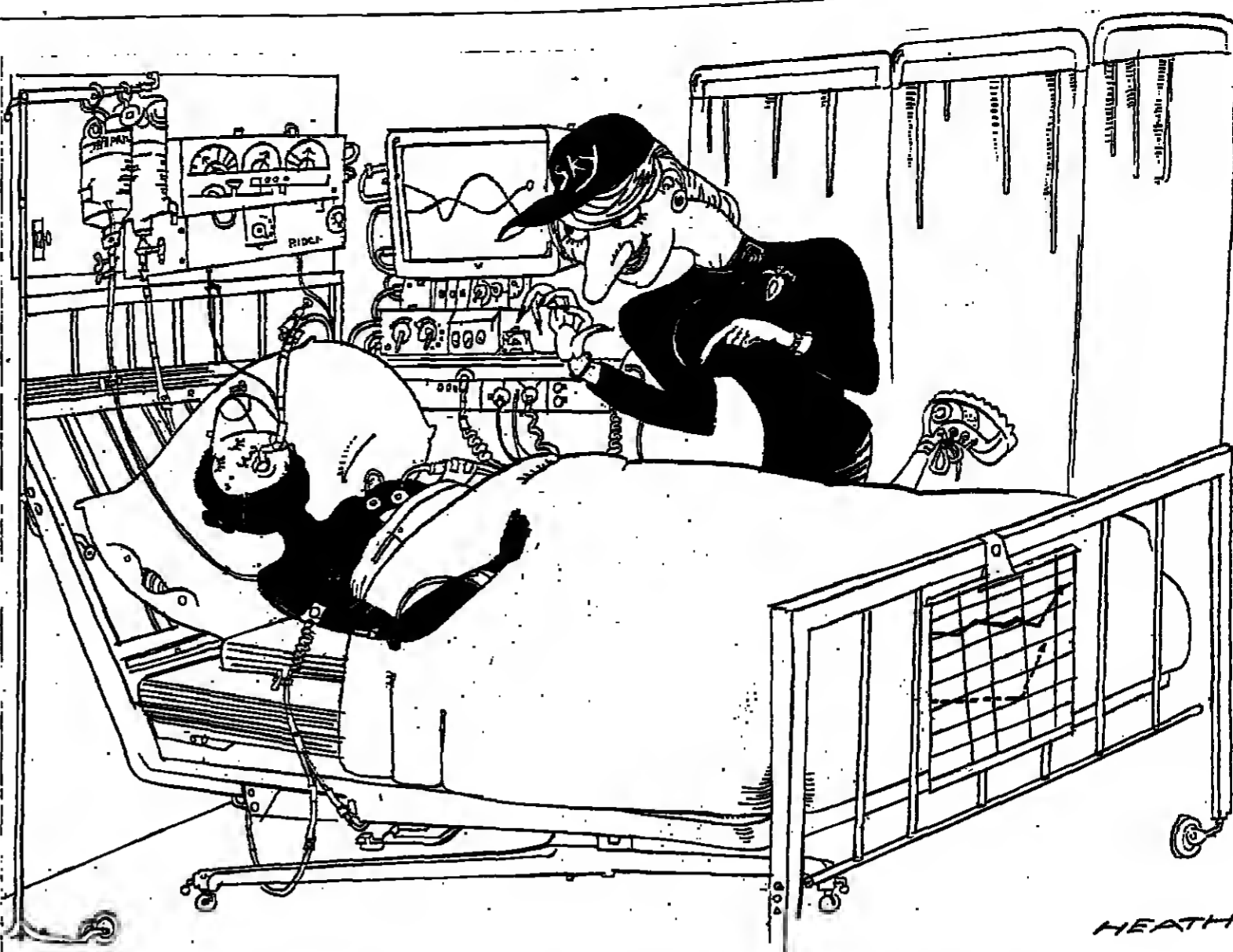
sequence has been severely to restrict the flow of international aid to the tens of thousands of refugees who, following Israel's own orders, have poured into Sidon.

Israeli officials say the naval blockade of the Beirut-Sidon road is intended to prevent military and other supplies reaching Hizbollah. According to the official line, individual cars are being targeted based on "intelligence information".

Pressed on this point, Israeli officials say the intention is to make it clear that anyone driving supplies to Hizbollah runs the risk of being shelled. UN convoys are allowed – by prior arrangement – to pass unhindered.

This was always a political war, launched to teach Hizbollah a lesson, to toughen the electoral image of Shimon Peres and bludgeon Syria into joining the wider Middle East peace. Yet the conduct of the war has rendered it a political disaster: increasing popular support in Lebanon for Hizbollah, giving the Israeli opposition a field day and placing the future of Arab-Israeli peace in the hands of the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad.

In the absence of a rapid ceasefire, the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, must press Israel to cease its bombardment of Lebanon's main civilian artery and all other activities that endanger civilian life at great political risk for little obvious military gain.



The operation was a success, I was on the front page of all the newspapers!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Abuse scandal: when child care is tangled in red tape

Sir: My memory takes me back to 1948, when following the Curtis Report on the ill-treatment of children in residential care, each local authority set up a children's department, to provide a specialist caring service for children who were deprived of good family life. After 20 years, children's departments were integrated into the enlarged generic social services departments.

As in 1948, we are again faced with the problem of how to organise a service best suited to the needs of children in care. Clearly, better supervision of standards, staff selection and training are required. But is that all?

Larger departments have advantages in co-ordinating services and setting priorities for various client groups. But bureaucratic structures become self-perpetuating and remote from the services provided. In social services departments this seems to have reached the stage where the allocation of finance and the time taken by social workers in fulfilling managerial requirements is at the expense of the client.

Vulnerable children, particu-

larly, need above all, warm human relationships and understanding. Perhaps what is also required is an examination of how social workers can be relieved of so much time-consuming paper work and so many meetings to enable them to spend more time with the children for whom they are responsible.

KENNETH ALDOUS
Banstead, Surrey

Sir: It is not only in residential homes that abusers are active ("Paedophiles 'control' children's homes", 22 April). Adverts for holiday playscheme staff attract replies which get no further once we ask people to sign the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act form. This is all we can do since the Crown Prosecution Service is so reluctant to prosecute because of the belief that people with learning disabilities will not be able to give evidence in court, either as a witness or victim.

Incidentally, Makaton sign language has no sign for "abuse".

PAM HANNAH
Honorary Secretary
Mencap
Bristol

Litigation kills spirit of adventure

Sir: Ben Smolden may feel fulfilled ("Rugby verdict changes sporting life", 20 April) but should the rest of us – while commiserating with his tragic injury – be so bappy? His act of suing the referee was another episode in the ever increasing series of "damages" being awarded against someone who was simply doing his or her job.

These are some of my experiences: in the primary school where I am a governor the children cannot use eggs in cookery classes in case a child becomes ill and a parent sues. I cannot organise a traditional raft race in a village carol/raggata because of the huge premium for public liability cover. My council cannot build an adventure playground

because the peril is too great. A friend who has been a scout leader for over 30 years will no longer take scouts from Salcombe to Dartmouth in a whaler for their summer camp as he used to do his or her job.

If individuals or institutions wilfully provide unsafe practices or equipment, they should be indicted, but this litigious culture we seem to be inheriting from the Americans will destroy the British tradition of enterprise, adventure, tolerance, innovation, and care for others.

ROGER ANSTEE
Kingsbridge, Devon

Success for British jobs

Sir: You have sensationalised a routine exchange of correspondence between me and a government colleague, about the interpretation of statistics, and contrived to invent bad news in our manufacturing sector – an area of outstanding recent success for Britain ("Minister in secret alert on job losses", 23 April).

You ignored the underlying picture in the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing growth has been experiencing a temporary slowdown; but both the CBI and the IoD have today reported confidence that output will rise in the months ahead. Since the recovery began, manufacturing output has risen by 8 per cent. Manufacturing employment rose in February and there are more than 50,000 more jobs now than there were at the beginning of 1994. That is the real picture of the state of the manufacturing sector.

IAN LANG, MP
(Galloway and Upper
Nithsdale, Con)
House of Commons
London SW1

The writer is President of the Board of Trade.

West blinded by the Holocaust

Sir: In the discussion of the events now affecting Lebanon, it would be good to see an occasional reminder of the modern history of the Middle East, particularly Palestine. The one major relevant thing that most people seem to know is that six million Jews perished in abominable circumstances in the Holocaust. It is right that such an enormity should never be forgotten. But it is relevant to the Middle East only in its powerful influence on the collective mind of the West. That state of mind has induced a persistent blindness in the West to the injustice perpetrated on the Arabs, first by the Zionist movement and then by the State of Israel.

A century ago the Jewish population of the area was only about 6 or 7 per cent, and those were living among, and in much the same way as, the local Arabs. Many were tenant farmers, renting from absentee landlords but with a right to pass occupancy down the generations according to local customary law. The international Zionist movement began a programme of buying from the landlords and evicting the non-Jewish occupants, with-

out compensation. By the 1930s, when Arab distress was becoming acute, their villages were being bombed to help "encourage" them to move. The inevitable Arab revolt occurred. In the 1930s Britain, during its mandate period, proposed partitioning the country. The proposal was opposed by some of the Zionists, but Ben Gurion said: "... after the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the state, we will abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine."

The Holocaust wiped from the West's postwar collective mind any sense of justice for the Arabs. The UN endorsed the establishment of Israel, and has sought in vain to contain Israel within its agreed limits. The public, unfamiliar with the Palestine history, but familiar with the Holocaust, has for long tended to see Israel as victim. It is time the balance of understanding was corrected. Public opinion might then more fairly influence governments. We in Britain have a particular responsibility.

JOHN TIPPLER
Spalding, Lincolnshire

Kept down by the class ceiling

Sir: Bryan Appleyard (18 April) thinks a classless society is a dead society. Only a member of the middle classes could think that.

To be working-class in this country, even now, is to be denied many things. At its worst it includes jobs, opportunities, prospects, a house of your own and self-respect: even at its best it includes entry into the worlds of art, literature and music, a really interesting, well-paid job and a halfway decent standard of living.

Working-class people tend to live in houses owned by others, whether a private landlord or a local council, with all the attendant lack of freedoms. They may have a holiday abroad every year but this will probably be in a resort staffed and organised for the package trade, where they will not travel in-country and they will not speak the native language. Generally they will have a

regional accent, there will be more records in the house than books (and no hardbacks), they will drink beer rather than wine and own one suit for weddings and funerals.

Of our parents' four children (father a miner, mother a cleaner) I am still the only one to have gone through further education or to have a white-collar job, despite all our parents' ambitions for us. In fact, I am the only one in regular employment. To be working-class in Britain is essentially to learn – and very young – not to ache for what you will never possess.

PATRICIA MANFIELD-DEVINE
London N17

Sir: What do the upper classes use to fill their mouths (letter, 19 April)? Silver spoons, presumably.

JACK FORTUNE
London SE24

Easing debt crisis

Sir: It is good news that Kenneth Clarke is sticking with the UK's good record on debt relief (report, 22 April). The proposals being thrashed out between the IMF, the World Bank and the G7 countries will at last – if they are fully implemented – go some way towards lifting the worst of the burden from the poorest countries.

The human cost of debt is enormous – already, for instance, Uganda spends 12 times as much on debt repayment as on health-care. Throughout Africa, health and education budgets have been slashed, and infant mortality rates and malnutrition have gone up. Surely, even in purely financial terms, a slight weakening of the IMF's financial base is a small price to pay to salvage several national economies.

BILL LINTON
London, N13

Old Protector

Sir: The former Edward VIII (died in 1972, aged 77) and the former Lord Protector, Richard Cromwell (died in 1712, aged 85) might also deserve inclusion in the club of heads of state to have lived past the age of 70 (Letters, 22 April).

MIKE HANCOX
Stourbridge, West Midlands

Railway in trust

Sir: All of us who support the railways and can afford it should buy shares in Railtrack. If enough of us do, we can make our presence felt at shareholders' meetings and, when a new government arrives in power which is more sympathetic to the railways than the present one, we could then sell our shares back to the government at cost price. What better way of "holding" the railways in trust for the nation" than to do it ourselves?

TONY CHARTER
Southsea, Hampshire

Penn's place

Sir: In "Trails of the Unexpected" (20 April), I read: "October 1996 marks the centenary of the death of Walthamstow's most famous son, poet, artist, designer, socialist and much else besides, William Morris."

BRENDA M FREEMAN (née Penn)
Brimscombe, Gloucestershire

The outlook: gloomy with some dry humour

Today – an in-depth look at why we are having the driest winter since records began, courtesy of our resident expert, Mr Weatherman.

Is this in fact the driest winter since records began?

Mr Weatherman writes: Not yet. What do you mean, not yet?

Well, winter hasn't ended yet. When does winter end?

When summer begins.

When's that?

When we feel like it.

When's that?

When we start opening the windows and taking our cardigans off.

That's not very scientific, is it?

I'm a weather forecaster, not a scientist. What made you think there was anything scientific about weather forecasting?

Well, it's one of the sciences, isn't it? Meteorology? One of the -ologies?

Oh, sure, yes, meteorology, yes. Meteorology we're very hot on. Ask me anything about meteors and I'm your man. Weather is another matter.

Then how accurate are you when it comes to weather?

Very accurate indeed. 100 per cent accurate.

In your forecasts?

No. In saying what has already happened today, or yesterday. You'll notice that weather forecasters are at



MILES KINGSTON

their happiest when starting a report with words like, "Well, today has been wet throughout Britain, although temperatures were again quite high, with the best being recorded at Skegness and blah blah blah". Not much danger of getting the weather wrong if you look backwards. That's why we love being asked if this is the driest winter on record.

Is this in fact the driest winter on record?

So far, yes.

What do you hate being asked?

We have been asked what the weather's going to do tomorrow.

Why?

Because we often get it wrong.

So why do people go on asking you, if you get it wrong?

Because people have a short memory span. They forget what the forecast was. Last week, there was one day when all the forecasts said it was going

to be gloomy and wet. In fact, it was the hottest and sunniest day for weeks because the rain didn't arrive till the evening. Of course, we didn't admit this. We just said in the evening forecasts, "Well, the rain is going to continue till tomorrow..." and not one person rang up to say, "You lying blagblats! It hasn't started yet!"

Why didn't they ring up?

Nobody minds if we forecast bad weather and it turns out good. It's the other way round that they mind – when we forecast sun and it piddles down all day.

Then wouldn't it make sense to forecast bad weather whenever you are in doubt?

Oh, we do. We ALWAYS forecast that things are going to be worse than we think they really will be. That way, either we are right, or we get it pleasantly wrong.

You always give us pessimistic forecasts?

Certainly. Hadn't you noticed?

No.

Good. The trick is working, then. So, is this the driest winter so far?

Certainly, since cylinders began.

What about records?

I think you'll find that cylinders came before records.

If the rain isn't falling here, is it falling somewhere else? Is some-

where else having the wettest winter since cylinders began?

Yes.

Where?

I haven't the faintest idea. Weathermen in Britain are only paid to know about the weather in the UK and in places where we go on hols.

Is that why the British weather map pretends that Ireland doesn't even exist? And why Northern Ireland seems to be the whole of Ireland?

Mr Weatherman writes: Yes. Weatherwise, only Northern Ireland exists.

When they show the weather map on Irish TV, do they show ONLY the Republic and not the Six Counties?

No. In Dublin they give the forecast for Northern Ireland as well.

Why?

Because the Pope asks them to.

Why does the Pope ask them to?

To annoy Ian Paisley.

Is there any truth in that?

I have no idea. I am not interested in the truth. I am a weatherman. I am trained to ignore the truth and deal in probabilities delivered with a sickening smile, without knocking the symbols off the chart.

So, WHY is this the driest winter on record?

I thought you'd never ask. And now we've run out of space.

The answer tomorrow!

201501

Imprisonment of truth



Politicians are killing public debate, says Polly Toynbee. Below: why journalists, by trivialising news, must share the blame



Michael Howard faces the cameras. But where is the informed discussion of prison policy? Tiddy Maitland-Titterton

Prison works - Michael Howard is quite right. It works for him every time. Tightening the screws on prison regimes can get you a mile-high *Daily Mail* headline any dull news day. "Howard Bans Jail Cell TV" splashed the *Mail's* front page yesterday morning. The Home Secretary orders "a crackdown on prison perks" and is "taking a determined stand to establish a more austere regime in jails".

Such cynicism takes the breath away - government by *Daily Mail* headline. It seems to be the only reassurance left to a party drowning in its last pitiful days in power. The people no longer count. The facts certainly don't matter. The only way the Government knows it is still alive is by reading the *Mail* to see how it is doing.

It is government by 'Daily Mail' headline

Sometimes ministers get a kick in the teeth, sometimes they land a nice big fish, like yesterday. There is no other reality.

Senior civil servants in the Home Office have all but despaired of either rationality or even a hint of honesty from ministers. They no longer dare to advise ministers that proposed policies may be seriously wrong - they know it makes no difference. How it plays on the *Mail* front page is all that matters. This is the strongest indication that the Tories do not expect to win the next election, since they do not expect to pick up the pieces of their policies. They are not stupid and they know that their prison policies are unachievable, unworkable, unaffordable and very nearly mad.

But where are the debates about this? Where is the Opposition? Silently biding its time. What is the point of lying down in front of Mr Howard's steamroller? Jack Straw asks. Only by his acts in power shall we know Mr Straw, and we can guess he will do better. Yet by failing to

speak out, the public is denied meaningful discussion or real enlightenment on the crime and punishment issues people rightly feel so strongly about. There is no one to tell them what works - only empty and expensive policies designed to please and bamboozle them, not to solve the problem. Who is there to scrutinise value for taxpayers' money spent on soaring prison numbers? The deficit in serious discussion on most issues that matter leaves an electorate either dangerously ignorant or wearily disaffected with all politicians.

Most of the policies in the recent White Paper threatening far longer sentences are officially not due to be implemented until the end of 1999 - in other words, never. They are

just front-page policies, not plans at all. They are worth about as much as a manifesto pledge by the Green Party. For if Mr Howard imagines that his main job is to help his party win the next election with as much law and order bombast as he can summon, he must reckon that he will be rewarded by not being returned to the Home Office to see his pigeons come home to roost. He counted them out, but let some other guy count them in again.

Taking battery-operated television sets away from 2,000 long-serving prisoners who have bought their own is a piffling gesture of "austerity". But this nasty little announcement has brought rich headline dividends, so who cares? There are no votes in prisons, or at least

not in running good prisons that might actually work. There are only headlines to be had from tough prisons.

However, even the *Mail* had the grace to report that Mr Howard is ignoring high-level warnings and that Sir John Latham's report on prison security said more in-cell television could aid security by providing "a calming influence and a powerful incentive to good conduct". If not his civil servants, then plentiful other knowledgeable voices are telling Mr Howard that his prison policy is a catastrophe, a tinder box of tension building up inside many jails. One prison governor said wryly, "The question is just a matter of timing - which blows first, another

election? Howard has lit a fuse and it is not a very long one."

But where is the public debate on all this? Not in Westminster among those we elect and pay to thrash out policies. Penal policy and how to rehabilitate criminals has been swallowed up into that huge black hole of problems that mainstream politicians no longer talk about. It joins poverty and the plight of the dispossessed, drugs and the law, the future of the monarchy, or taxation of the rich as one of the great unmentionables. Look for no leadership here among our "leaders", only craven following of the imaginary flock, as represented by the *Daily Mail*.

The facts about prisons are these: Michael Howard has overseen an increase of the

prison population by an astounding 25 per cent in three years, to the highest level ever - and it is still rising by 150 a week, each one costing £2,000 a month.

The new head of the prison service, Richard Tilt, has said that 25 new jails will have to be built over the next 12 years at a cost of some £6bn if the White Paper is implemented. Mandatory sentences for violent and sex offenders and three-time burglars, together with prisoners serving their full sentences, will lead to another 30,000 in jail.

But what no one has said is that this will never happen because it can never happen. No government will spend that much more money on prisons. This is mirage policy done with mirrors - it doesn't exist. What is actually happening is not

There are no votes in running good prisons

spending but huge cuts in prison budgets.

When I asked Jack Straw last week if prison numbers would fall under him, he said cautiously that he couldn't say they would necessarily. Why couldn't he say they would? Because the *Daily Mail* next day would no doubt have hit him with a headline saying "Straw To Open Prison Gates - Murderers and Rapists to Go Free".

Other voices are raised: Judge Stephen Lumley, the recent much-respected Chief Inspector of Prisons, has written on these pages of what can be done with good education, rehabilitation, arts and drugs programmes. He believes it has never been tried effectively, but intensive education does work. Prisoners can be redeemed.

Where is the major politician to make that case? Labour, for the time being, has abdicated from the law and order debate. Lock them up and throw away the key is the only game in town until the general election. The *Daily Mail* rules, OK.

idea of people's real concerns. Surveys repeatedly show that the priorities of ordinary people are utterly different from those of the media. To reform themselves, he suggests, the media should take on these ordinary concerns and force politicians to address these rather than those defined in Washington.

The real question is: what, exactly, is news? What is, ultimately, important? Between OJ Simpson and the North Korean atomic bomb - an example drawn from Fallows - which matters? Any rational person would answer the latter. But the American ratings said the opposite, so how can the newsmen argue?

The problem is that the media have to retain their own sense of importance. The multi-million dollar anchor-men must follow the ratings, but they must do so with the sort of gravitas that suggests the ratings are right - that OJ Simpson really matters. This forces them to be blind to the way in which the audience-media nexus is inventing a reality, a scale of significance. That this scale is, by any objective standards, perverse should warn us, as Fallows does, that democracy really is in danger of being undermined.

Fallows's solution centres on the

The American media reduces politics to a personality contest, and Britain is heading the same way, warns Bryan Appleyard



pundits. Washington is the only place on earth. All policy issues are reported solely in terms of political advantage. So Bosnia is not a matter of human suffering but of the President's approval rating. Absurdly faked TV anchor-men condense the world into bite-sized chunks of predictable pap. Meanwhile, the pundits reduce all complexity to an unresolvable snarling match.

Fallows's case is that the only agenda of the media elites is a kind of perpetually recycled chat chatter. Broadcast journalism fights the ratings war by turning politics into sport. And print journalism has been corrupted. Writers are lured into the game by being offered the supreme prize - TV punditry.

The effect is to reinforce the media's sense of their own role as an elite. They operate according to club-like

rules and conventions, excluding alternative versions. Policies are presented in terms of personality, not impact on ordinary, non-media people. Indeed, the entire electorate is treated as a dumb mass of pro or anti whose lives gain expression only through opinion polls.

Could it happen here? To some extent it already has. We have the spin-doctors and we have the lobby correspondents, eagerly recording their schemes. But so far we have not quite descended into the mire. This is because, first, print journalism is more powerful in this country. As long as prose is at least as important as the broadcast word, subtlety and complexity can never quite be lost.

Second, Britain is nothing like as parochial as the United States. Fallows reveals, shockingly, that the major news networks devote an aver-

age of six minutes a day to non-American news. Worse still, these few fragments from abroad consist mainly of catastrophe and weirdness. Convinced by hype that their televisions are a window on the world, Americans think of themselves as a beleaguered island of sanity in a landscape of gesticulating, murderous foreigners.

But there are deeper issues here that Fallows does not fully address. For much of the insanity he records is inevitable. News must compete with the huge flood of information and entertainment now available to everybody. It must seem as exciting and direct if it is to maintain its ratings and its circulation. Inevitably, it must present its material in competitive terms - and that means brutal conflict or sensation packaged to endorse its audience's expectations.

Fallows's solution centres on the

The Tokyo gas attack case might force a nation to ask itself hard questions, says Richard Lloyd Parry

Japan holds its breath for the Aum trial

Thirteen months and four days after it began, the most traumatic episode in post-war Japanese history is about to enter its final act. At 10am today, heralded by circling helicopters, divisions of police, and many thousands of onlookers, Shoko Asahara, guru of the Aum Shinri Kyo cult, will finally enter the Tokyo District Court for the start of his mammoth trial. He faces 17 charges, including abduction, manufacture of illegal chemicals, and the murder of 11 commuters with sarin nerve gas in the Tokyo subway last March.

The attack, carried out on Asahara's orders by 10 of his young disciples, was without precedent - the first time in history that a terrorist group had employed weapons of mass destruction, let alone in a country that prides itself on its criminality and social cohesion. The trial itself is the culmination of the highest police investigation in Japanese history. It will go on for years, but by the end of the hearings, Asahara is almost certain to be sentenced to death by hanging for any one of two dozen killings.

But a curious emptiness pervades the build up to the trial. For all the

media palaver, the legal overkill and the mountain of facts that have accumulated about the crime and its alleged perpetrators, the court proceedings will bring no sense of relief or resolution. The Japanese will be left with a lot of unanswered questions about the responsibility of their own

What drew so many clever young people to a man like Asahara?

society in fostering such a monster. What drew some of the cleverest young people in the country to a man so transparently fraudulent as Asahara? How could a group of religious crackpots amass an arsenal of deadly chemicals, and how could they go undetected for so long?

The dismal shortcomings revealed by Aum Shinri Kyo case exist at several levels, and the most obvious example can be seen in the work of the Japanese police. Since Asahara

founded his cult in the mid-1980s, he had attracted numerous allegations of property fraud, harassment and holding disciples against their will. In 1990, a lawyer campaigning against the cult was murdered on the guru's orders along with his wife and baby son. A badge dropped by one of the killers, and bearing the Aum logo, was found in his abandoned house, but the police insisted that they lacked evidence for a full-blown investigation.

In June 1994, nine months before the horror on the subway, seven people were killed in an earlier sarin attack in a small castle town north of Tokyo. Circumstantial evidence once again pointed the finger at Aum, which the police knew to be amassing chemical ingredients in its mountain commune. But even after the subway attack itself, Asahara and his followers were allowed two whole days to cover their tracks before the raids finally began.

On paper, Japan's justice system is the most successful in the industrialised world, with tiny crime figures and a 99 per cent conviction rate. This remarkable record depends largely on

confession evidence gathered, sometimes under suspicious circumstances, during long periods of interrogation. Memories of the Second World War, when the police acted as an arm of the authoritarian military government, have made undercover and surveillance operations something of a

He attracted educated young followers stifled by hierarchy

taboo. Faced with a suspect like Aum Shinri Kyo - highly organised, tightly knit and irrational - the police reacted with frowning bemusement.

The reasons for Asahara's success are deep and complex and will take years to be fully understood, but if analysts agree on anything, it is that they have to do with repression. Aum Shinri Kyo drew on an emotional underclass of highly educated young followers whose ambitions and potential were thwarted by a stiflingly hier-

archical society in which talent and ambition yield place to the demands of rank and seniority. Most of its 10,000 members in Japan - among them scholars, scientists and soldiers - knew nothing of their leader's murderous intentions and were drawn instead to an organisation that promised an alternative to institutional careers.

In dealing with this situation, which served as a vote of no confidence by thousands of its own citizens, the only concrete measure produced by the government is, ironically, more repression than ever. Sometime in the next few months, the government will put into action a plan to outlaw Aum Shinri Kyo under the Subversive Activities Law, a draconian piece of legislation devised during the 1950s to combat revolutionary political groups and never before used against an organisation. Aum Shinri Kyo will become an illegal group; meetings of its members and publication of its literature will be an offence. The cult, in other words, is being treated as an outsider, a Cold War adversary, when what it resembles above all is an enemy within.

Let's help men kick the sadness

On 'Defeat Depression Action Day', Michael Shooter calls for a fresh approach to male sufferers

I was young, I was male: I was going to be a doctor. Young men in the caring professions do not get depressed - or so I thought. In fact, I was on the edge of collapse.

I had always had an up-and-down personality, prone to flying moods that would come and go without reason. This time the blackness stayed with me. When a favourite patient died on me, I plunged into a pit of worthlessness. I was no good as a doctor; I had never achieved anything; I would always be a failure. I had difficulty getting off to sleep and woke early, drenched in sweat. I lost all interest in sex and ate to stave off unhappiness. I went to the dean to tell him I was giving up medicine. I was ready to give up life itself.

This was depression, of course, and he recognised it. His sympathy was the first step in my recovery - from an episode of what I now know to be a continuing vulnerability. I went to see a therapist who treated me with words and drugs. Above all, she helped me to see that this was an illness which was not my own fault.

Mine is not an exceptional story - only, perhaps, in the speed with which I got help. One in five of us will become depressed at some point in our lives. At any one time, one in 10 of us will be struggling with depression of some degree.

Men are just as vulnerable as women and may be even more so. We are three times more likely to commit suicide than women and in some groups it is easy to see why. Widowed males "cope" less well with bereavement; divorced males are often separated from home and children. Doctors, vets and dentists work under enormous pressures; farm workers toil in dangerous isolation. Many men have no work at all. The suicide rate among young men between 15 and 24, the most worrying group of all, has risen by over 75 per cent in little more than a decade.

Men are reared in the belief that we should be strong and self-reliant; that it is weak to admit to frailty and beyond the pale to ask for help of any kind. We dislike open talk of our feelings. Confronted by a partner who wants to talk, the depressed man may retreat further into his shell and destroy the relationship in the process. For the young man stripped of self-respect by educational "failure", unemployment and rootlessness, with little family sympathy and isolated by poverty, the very idea of help

may be fraught with stigma. How much easier to turn to alcohol and drugs, which only make depression worse.

So how can men be helped in their depression? First, it needs to be recognised. As much as 65 per cent of male depression goes unnoticed - by the general practitioner, male himself perhaps, who fails to see through the aches and pains to the unhappiness underneath or gives it scant attention, if he does see what is going on.

The treatment, when offered, is not always what is needed. Many of us find conventional psychotherapy, involving talking about feelings, just too difficult. Cognitive

Services should shift to places such as leisure centres

therapy - which gets clients to reflect on their beliefs and perceptions about the world and gain a sense of logic and perspective without a discussion of feelings - can help men to address their most pessimistic thoughts.

Conventional clinics must be rethought: they are not places in which many men feel comfortable and able to tackle their depression. Psychiatrists should occasionally shift their services to places where men feel less threatened, to leisure centres, for example, which more and more men already use to improve their general health. Just as child psychiatric services have adapted innovatively to the difficulties children experience in expressing themselves, so the adult services must get out of their ivory towers.

We know a lot about the causes and cures of depression, that physical exercise helps, that drugs and drink make it worse, that support from partners - and their involvement in treatment - makes for quicker recovery. The figures should worry us, but we do have the power to help men back from their bleak, isolated loneliness to happier lives.

The writer is a consultant in child and adolescent psychiatry with Gwent Community Health Trust. A fact sheet on Depression in Men is available from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG. (0171-235 2351).

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'It may be that Mr Strong has good excuses for his failure to deliver shareholder value, but when you are paid nearly £500,000 a year, excuses are not what shareholders expect'

A high-flier with the skids under him at Sears

Liam Strong has had four years to turn around Sears, the struggling retail giant; as yesterday's results showed, he has failed to make much, if any, progress. Sears is such a ragbag of unconnected retail businesses that this may not all have been his fault. The task may always have been largely impossible. The City is a ruthless and unforgiving place, however, and there can be little doubt that time is fast running out for this former British Airways high-flier. The skids are under him, and Mr Strong will be lucky to see in another Christmas trading season.

How could things have gone so badly wrong? He started reasonably well, if slowly, and made low-profile progress for the first couple of years. Geoffrey Maitland Smith, who had been there for donkey's years, first as chief executive and then chairman, would go, he promised, and the deep problems of British Shoe Corporation would be addressed. It was not until last year that Mr Maitland Smith finally slipped away, unloved and unannounced, and judging by the latest calamitous results, Mr Strong has never managed to get to grips with British Shoe.

Indecision, prevarication, lack of direction — this was the sort of culture for which Sears has long been known. Nothing much seemed to change after Mr Strong arrived. Executives came and went with alarming rapidity. Few of them could have had time to develop, let alone execute a strategy for the businesses they were charged with, even if they had been the right choices in the first

place. The company's price continued to flounder and the share has barely moved since Mr Strong arrived, underperforming the rest of the stock market by 35 per cent.

More recently, there have been some real howlers: the write-down of old footwear stock and the attempt to sell off cheap alongside the new lines, and the too-rapid roll-out of new formats cannibalising old ones along the way, to cite just two. In the end Mr Strong's solution was the one he could have applied right at the start — to sell the problematic businesses entirely. When he finally bit the bullet, however, it was at knockdown prices, which have cost all last year's profits and the same again in write-downs and rationalisation expenses. To give away a large slug of your market share to Stephen Hinchliffe may or may not be an acceptable thing to do but when it is at considerable cost to the balance sheet it is hard to justify. The expensive leases on these unwanted shops could yet revert to Sears if the Hinchliffe business founders.

The one business that seems to be doing well, Selfridges, was the one Mr Strong had originally earmarked for sale. Management never had any proper view of what the core businesses should be or what strategy should unite them. It may be that Mr Strong has good excuses for his failure to deliver shareholder value, but when you are paid nearly £500,000 a year, excuses are not what shareholders expect. They expect solutions. Sir Boh Reid, the chairman, says Mr Strong has

the support of the board and so far institutions seem prepared to see if the latest clearing can bring about some relief. But who can believe the promise of better times ahead after the latest disappointments?

Manufacturing is not the main game

There is tremendous romance in manufacturing. Monuments like Fort Dunlop, just off the M6 at Birmingham, or the Llanwrstwyth steel works in South Wales, are evocative symbols of this country's former economic might. But manufacturing does not matter much in modern Britain. It produces less than a quarter of output and employs fewer than one in five of those with jobs.

This is not insignificant, but it highlights the danger of setting economic policy on the basis of manufacturing alone. In judge by the comments of some City pundits, the current weakness in industry is enough to set the tone for monetary policy. Yet even the CBI, no mean lobby for manufacturers, felt compelled to point out in yesterday's industrial trends survey that its corresponding surveys of retailing and financial services suggested the economy is picking up nicely.

Manufacturing is sending out distress signals at a time when services are growing quite strongly, the unemployment count is falling and financial markets are looking very buoyant indeed. Financial and business ser-

vices alone account for 19 per cent of the economy. They grew at 3.9 per cent last year. The transport and communications sector, contributing more than 8 per cent of GDP, grew by an impressive 5.1 per cent. The output of the service industries as a whole grew five times as fast as manufacturing in 1995.

The fixation on the grimy glamour of manufacturing creates a deeper problem, however. It is not just a question of getting interest rates a bit wrong by focusing too much on the minority sector of the economy. It also means that Britain does not nurture its successes. The City has the money and influence to celebrate its own achievements. Outside the Square Mile, we downplay the economic importance of much British creativity and success in industries ranging from television and the music business through retailing to software and industrial design. They do not have their monuments yet, but they are three times as important in the British economy as manufacturing.

Bargain basement at Railtrack

The public response thus far to the great Railtrack share offer probably says as much about the goods on offer as Labour's dire but largely empty threats about what it would do to Bob Horgan's trainset if it got into power.

The fact that 1.4 million would-be

investors have registered with a share shop, allowing them to qualify for the extra goodies on offer, may sound impressive. But when you consider that Gencos 2, which was a secondary offer to boot, promising no one a fast huck, managed to elicit twice that number of registrations, it puts things into perspective.

Ab, says the fat controller in charge of flogging Railtrack to a wary public, but Gencos 2 was twice the size and we have only spent half the amount promoting it. This kind of reasoning might be par for the course when drawing up railway timetables but it flies in the face of logic since the level of investor interest ought to be influenced as much by the returns available as the size of the offer.

In the case of Railtrack these are considerable indeed. The yield on the shares in year one makes them look like a steal not just in comparison with building society deposit accounts but also against almost any initial public offering we have seen before.

Still, even at this subdued level of interest the Railtrack offer should be comfortably subscribed, allowing the Government to claim a success of sorts and avoiding a nasty derailment in the after-market. Even so, the Railtrack flotation looks like being a Pyrrhic victory for politicians on both sides. In as much as Labour's threats have hit home, they have guaranteed that Railtrack will be knocked out at a bargain-basement price.

OFT calls for fresh curbs on market-makers

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

The Office of Fair Trading is pushing for further curbs on the privileges of market-makers prior to the introduction of a new way of trading equities in London. The key issue of the considerable power of market-makers, principally their ability to delay the publication of large trades, is the subject of intense negotiations between the Stock Exchange and all the main City regulators as well as the Treasury.

The Board of the Stock Exchange is expected tomorrow to announce a delay in the detailed consultation of the market about the introduction of the new equity trading system next year. Sources said the Stock Exchange feels it needs a clearer idea of what privileges for market-makers the regulators agree are acceptable for the new system before consulting with investment banks and institutional investors on the precise details of how the new system should operate.

The negotiations have reopened the wounds of a sensitive debate that was only partially settled last year when, after several OFT reports complaining that the privileges that the big market-makers distorted competition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer accepted a compromise whereby the publication delays were shortened. Under the new rules, 75 per cent of trade by value must be published immediately.

Yesterday John Bridgeman, director general of the OFT, told MPs at a Select Committee: "We would like to see immediate publication for all trades. That is our ultimate objective and we believe it is possible to go further than the 75 per cent rule."

Mr Bridgeman was giving evidence to the Treasury Committee as part of its inquiry into the Stock Exchange prompted by the sacking of its chief executive, Michael Lawrence, at the beginning of this year.

Mr Bridgeman made clear that in the current talks with the Stock Exchange the privileges accorded market-makers, the big firms that drive trading by quoting continuous buy and sell prices for shares, and especially the ability to delay informing the rest of the market of a big trade so they have time to offset their risks, is the OFT's main source of anti-competitive concern. The OFT is less worried, he said, about the privilege exempting market-makers from stamp duty.

The radical reform of share trading in London being worked on by the Stock Exchange proposes to introduce an electronic system that automatically matches buy and sell orders around the summer of next year.

Initially, however, this order-driven capacity is likely to be relatively limited and alongside it will be a facility for block trades carried out by the market-makers committing large amounts of capital. The market-makers are arguing that for this to succeed they will need similar privileges under the new system to those they enjoy under the current quote-driven mechanism.

As a consequence of the difficult negotiations on these privileges, the Stock Exchange is expected to put off the next stage of its consultation process on the order-driven reform. A first consultation showed that there was broad-based support for some order-matching system, similar to that used in all other main international financial centres.

IN BRIEF

• The US trade gap shrank to \$8.19bn (£5.4bn) in February thanks to a rise in exports. The highest contribution came from shipments of civilian aircraft. The sensitive bilateral deficit with Japan widened slightly, to \$3.9bn from \$3.8bn, but there were small declines in America's trade shortfalls with China and Canada, while the deficit with Western Europe halved to \$459m.

• The accountancy profession's investigation of the collapse of International Signal & Control, the defence company that brought its parent company Ferranti to its knees, is close to completion. The inquiry by the Joint Disciplinary Scheme, which examines the most serious allegations against members of the English and Scottish institutes of chartered accountants and the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants, began in mid-1993, following the discovery of a massive fraud in 1989.

• Sandoz shareholders overwhelmingly backed the \$36bn merger with Ciba-Geigy that will create Novartis, the world's second-highest drug company selling products ranging from Gerber baby foods to painkiller Voltaren. Novartis will have annual sales of \$22bn, surpassing Merck and ranking just behind Glaxo Wellcome of the UK. Ciba Geigy's shareholders will vote on the merger plan today.

• Amersham International has appointed Richard Laphorne, finance director of British Aerospace, to succeed Edwin Nixon as non-executive chairman from July. Mr Laphorne has been a non-executive director of Amersham since December 1988. Mr Nixon was appointed to the board of Amersham in 1987, taking on the chairman's role in April 1988.

• Lasmo said that operating costs were expected to fall to £3 per barrel in 1997 from £3.17 in 1995, reflecting rising production and continued emphasis on cost control. Rudolph Agnew, chairman, told shareholders at the annual meeting that the company's new production target for 1997 was 210,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day.

• Sunday Business sold 145,608 copies of its launch edition last Sunday, a spokesman for the company said. The initial print run was 330,000 copies against a planned 580,000. The 200-page, five-section debut edition hit the streets after a last-minute funding crisis as the paper's main potential backer — the Hinduja family from Mumbai, India — withdrew last week. Sunday Business declines to reveal its new backer.

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business

Van Miert alarmed at wave of power mergers

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

Karel Van Miert, the European competition commissioner, yesterday made clear that he was concerned about the latest wave of mergers in the electricity industry, which he said was taking the UK back to "square one."

Speaking at a Labour-sponsored conference at which Tony Blair and Gordon Brown made the keynote speeches, Mr Van Miert appeared ready to align himself with Labour fears about the re-emergence of the structure of vertical integration between generators and distributors in the electricity industry.

This was broken up at the time of privatisation when the UK separated generation and distribution.

The Monopolies Commission is believed to have given conditional clearance to takeovers of distributors by the two generators, National Power and PowerGen, while Southern Company of the US, which already owns a distributor, has said it would like to merge with National Power. The Labour Party has fiercely criticised the moves.

Mr Van Miert said he had noticed "with some concern" the mergers under way in the UK energy sector, which came at a time when the European Commission was "trying to go



Karel Van Miert: Echoing Labour fears on electricity

in the original British direction. It now appears that at the end of the day you are back to square one."

He suggested that EU member governments would be asking the commission why it was taking the stance it did, if the UK was reverting to the old structure.

Scrutiny of the current round of electricity mergers in the UK is the responsibility of the British government, not the commission, and Mr Van Miert did not suggest he was about to take action himself.

The conference also heard Adair Turner, director general of the CBI, call for the par-

ty's anti-inflation commitment to be enshrined in a "clear and specific target at around the present level of 2.5 per cent" and he also asked Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, to pledge to increase the independence of the Bank of England.

It is thought to have been the first time a director general of the CBI has spoken at a conference organised by Labour.

Mr Turner continued the CBI's efforts to remain politically neutral by rejecting both Tory and Labour claims about the health or otherwise of the economy and Britain's relative position in the international pecking order.

He said: "The record neither supports the assertion that we have a uniquely flourishing economy with all the problems solved, nor does it support the idea that we continue in relative decline and require a revolution in performance."

Growth had been about average for Europe over the last decade and "while it has not been any better than average it has not been worse."

Speaking after Mr Brown and Margaret Beckett, the shadow trade and industry minister, had torn into the Government's claims of improved economic performance, Mr Turner said Britain was an attractive place to do business.

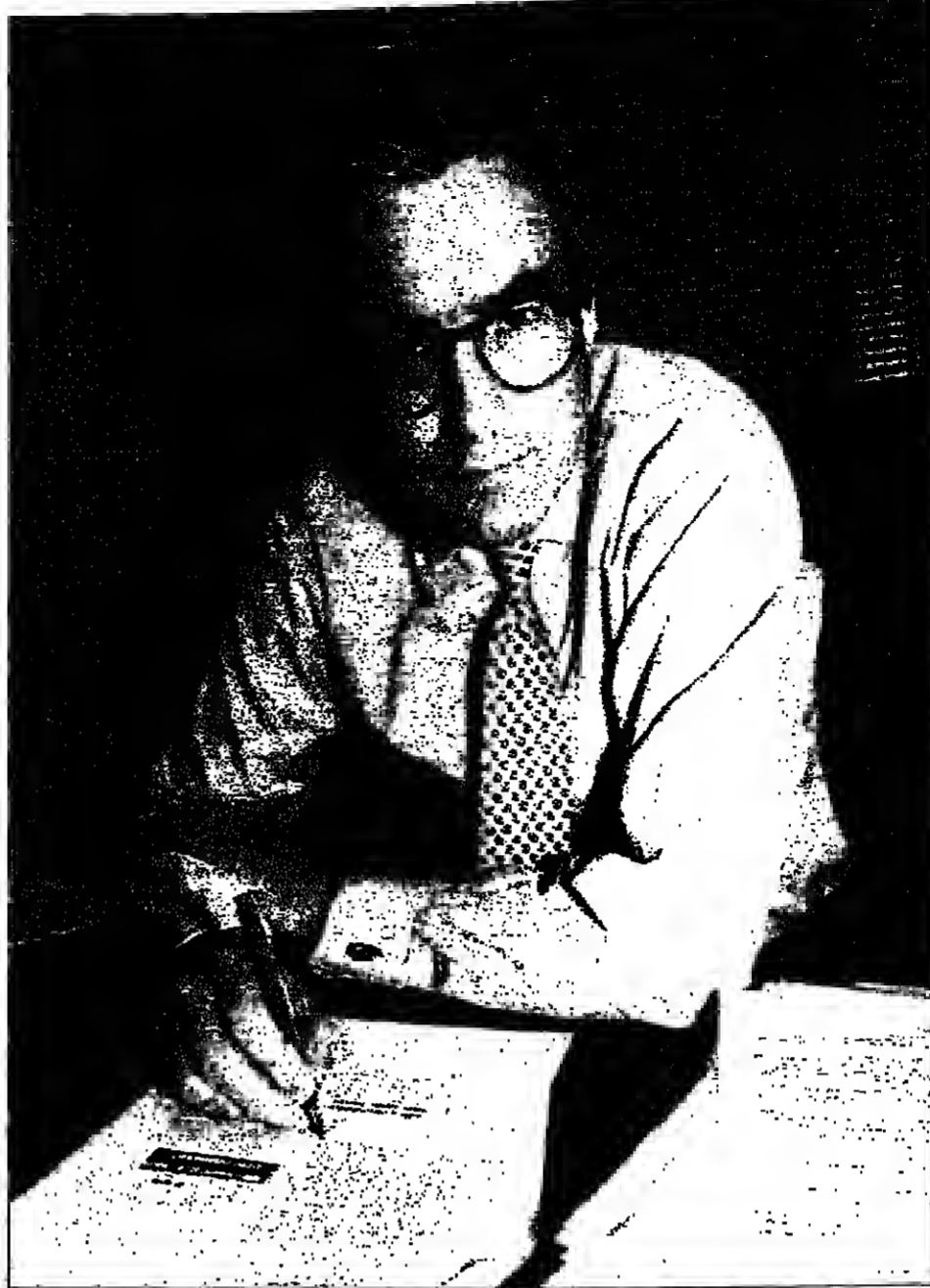
In terms of productivity, the UK had closed some but not all of the gap with main competitors, but while other European countries still ran large balance of trade surpluses the UK ran a deficit.

Mr Turner reaffirmed opposition to Labour's support for the European Social Chapter and a national minimum wage. But he said Labour had made significant strides towards a more business-friendly approach to economic policy.

It plans to issue a "business manifesto" as a challenge to both the main parties in July in the run-up to the next election.

Mr Turner said a flexible labour market was needed to deliver low unemployment. Business opposed the Social Chapter, he said, not so much because of what was in it today but because it could lead, in the future, to the imposition of labour market rigidities seen in some Continental countries.

On the minimum wage, he said: "It is one of the causes of high unemployment in France, and would increase unemployment here. We believe that there are better ways to fight the impact of low pay - via extension of the in-work benefit system and focusing personal tax reductions on lifting people out of the tax net altogether."



Adair Turner: Rejected both Labour and Tory claims about the health of the economy

Babcock suffers from UK row with Saudis

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Babcock International stunned the stock market yesterday after revealing that the UK's diplomatic row with Saudi Arabia would contribute to an £18m operating loss for last year. The news comes after the group revealed big problems at its German materials handling division last year and the shares plunged 15.5p to 113p yesterday.

Babcock said the losses would be more than offset by £21m of exceptional gains, principally from the sale of its Renfrew-based energy business, leaving a profit of £3m for the year to March. But the trading losses are a big setback after two years of a three-year recovery programme led by new management and their size dismayed analysts. One said: "This is obviously absolutely dismal. Everyone saw the company in March and this level of problem was not indicated then. It means that 1995 and 1996 profits will be decimated."

Nick Salmon, the chief executive who is trying to turn the group around with chairman John Park, said the Saudi losses would be less than half the £18m.

The company had been unexpectedly turned down for a big project in Saudi Arabia, thought to be a £70m deal to build a petrochemicals plant for Saudi Aramco, which has now gone to the Japanese.

"We built up staff and project teams on the expectation of the start of a major project which was first delayed and then switched to a non-UK contractor", he said.

Similar experiences have reportedly been had by other UK companies. "The official position is there is no difficulty with the UK and I think both governments are making strenuous efforts to support that aim. I think what is happening with Davy, John Brown and ourselves is that the reality is different."

Mr Salmon made no comment on the continued presence in the UK of the Saudi dissident, Mohammed Al-Masari, which is at the heart of the diplomatic dispute.

However, he said: "You have to regret that having made a concerted effort to develop a business in an area, that effort has been frustrated."

The loss of the business has cost 40 to 50 jobs and means that plans to recruit around 200 extra staff have been abandoned.

The Saudi business represents over a third of Babcock's process engineering business, which had a turnover of £86.7m in 1994/5, and has been built up rapidly over the past two to three years.

Dublin labels group buys Prontaprint for £18.9m

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Prontaprint, the stationery group that was taken private in 1992, was sold yesterday to the Dublin-based labels business Adare Printing Group for £18.9m.

The offer of £15.11 for each Prontaprint share was recommended by Richard Raworth, the company's executive chairman. Adare has claimed acceptances for 96.4 per cent of Prontaprint's shares.

Mr Raworth and his family own almost 60,000 shares, which they acquired in 1992 for £1.19 a share. The sale will net the family a windfall profit of more than £600,000. Shareholders also have the alternative of accepting a tender offer for their shares from the company itself if that makes more sense for tax purposes.

After the acquisition, Mr Raworth is expected to stay at the head of Prontaprint, which has 250 shops in Britain and made profits of £2m last year, with as much as £8m expected for 1995. He will also be offered a seat on the Adare board.

Adare, which grew strongly in the six months to October, has made no secret of its desire to expand into Britain. It will build on Prontaprint's existing fran-



Surging service: Prontaprint's profits have risen by 28 per cent a year since 1992

Photograph: Gerald Lewis

chise and hopes to develop its brand further. During 1995, Prontaprint's sales of its design, printing and copying services grew by 17 per cent to £24m. Profits have

grown by an average of 28 per cent a year since the buyout, which was backed by the venture capital groups 3i and ECI Ventures. That growth was well in excess of targets set at the

time of the deal, which involved the acquisition of Continuous Stationery, which was then quoted on the London stock market.

Adare moved into book

printing and publishing last year when it bought the Dublin-based Mount Salus Press Holdings. That took it into educational printing and computer manual production.

Salomon gains in first quarter

NIC CICCUTTI

Salomon Brothers, the second-largest US securities firm, yesterday reported first-quarter earnings of \$276m (£180m), the third-best ever achieved by the company.

The earnings gains came from trading in bonds and commodities as well as advising companies and underwriting securities.

Salomon's profit was more than twice the average estimates by analysts. It marked the third consecutive profitable quarter for the firm, which suffered through 1994 and the first half of 1995, amid trading losses, book-keeping problems and employee defections.

Derek C. Maughan, chairman and chief executive of the firm's securities unit, said: "Salomon Brothers produced excellent results for the quarter. Our objective is to build our underwriting and advisory revenues and to maintain effective control of our risk."

Analysts said Salomon, like the rest of Wall Street, had benefited from buoyant markets, increased underwriting

and the record pace of corporate mergers.

"They are doing what they've always done," said James Mulvey, a securities analyst at Dresdner Securities Inc. "They're primarily a trading house, and trading was good for them this quarter."

But concerns remained about the firm's ability to deliver consistent results or returns superior to its rivals. Tony Russ, an analyst at Shelby Cullom Davis & Co, said: "I still think this glass is half empty, when you have as big a quarter as this is and you only get a return of 26 per cent on equity."

With \$4.06bn of equity capital and \$191bn of assets, Salomon is the biggest bond trader in the world and among the highest oil traders.

Bond trading provided the bulk of the firm's revenue, rising to \$732m from \$398m a year earlier. The firm also gained in investment banking, where revenue rose seven-fold to \$181m.

Salomon was the second-largest underwriter in the US, with sales of \$27.2bn in US stocks and bonds for the first quarter.

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business

St Ives weathers the paper storm

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

St Ives continues to shine like a beacon above the rest of the printing industry. Its unfinishing commitment to investment throughout the recession has seen it pump £125m into the business over the past five years, all financed from internal cash flow. That is in stark contrast to others in the industry who have been forced to raise cash or undertake a seemingly continuous process of restructuring.

The fruits of St Ives' investment policy came through in half-year results showing profits raised a healthy 25 per cent to £19.6m in the six months to 26 January.

The figures included a maiden contribution of £1.31m from Jöhler Druck, the German printer of newspaper inserts and other direct response advertising material acquired in a £1.9m deal last September. No skeletons have been uncovered in that particular cupboard, which represents St Ives' first foray into the continental market for these products.

But despite results which beat many expectations, the market reacted by marking down the shares by 5p to 469p. St Ives is the UK's leading book printer, with around a fifth of the market, and there had been worries about the impact of the collapse of the net book agreement last year. Those now seem unfounded, as the group appears to have weathered the squall, with sales in the half year ahead in both hardback and paperback books.

More serious were delays and start-up problems with new printing presses at Caerphilly. The difficulties, combined with some caution amongst publishers after paper prices rose, hit profits in magazine printing. Nonetheless, the group has maintained volumes, winning several new titles such as *Loaded*, *Marie Claire* and *Cool*.

The rest of the business has continued to grow. The increase in bids and deals in the City fuelled first-half growth in security printing, where St Ives is a leading player, and the booming stock market bodes well for the future. But the main boost to the group's profits came from direct response and the new multimedia cassette sleeves to CD-Rom printing operation. The market for the former is expanding at around 5 per cent a year.

Net margins at the group appeared to slip a touch to 11.6 per cent in the first half, but in reality this reflects the increase in the direct marketing business where paper costs are borne by the printer rather than the customer, as in traditional printing. In reality, underlying margins are now close to St Ives' peak level of 13 per cent.

Given its strong market position in most areas of the home market, St Ives is increasingly going to have to look abroad for growth. With capital expenditure expected to fall from around £48m to £30m in 1996, net cash could be back up to £29m by the year end.

Heavy demands at Harvey Nicks

Harvey Nichols, the upmarket Knightsbridge store, has built its reputation on selling fancy goods at fancy prices to its well heeled clientele. It is fitting, therefore, that the company's flotation should be priced at a punchy level that may deter all but the shop's most ardent supporters. Even Edina and Patsy of *Absolutely Fabulous* might think twice about this one.

At 270p per share, the price values Harvey Nichols at £148.5m, which is an awful lot for a single store. An additional problem for private investors is that as the shares are being placed only with institutions, ordinary folk cannot buy them until they start trading on Friday. By that time, given the reported level of institutional interest, they are likely to have risen to an even higher premium.

The real winner here is Dickson Concepts, the Hong Kong-based company which currently owns all the shares but

giving the group plenty of firepower. Henderson Crosthwaite's full-year profit forecast of £43.5m suggests a forward multiple of 16 for the shares. A fair rating for such quality.

will be reduced to a 56.4 per cent holding after the sale.

The company's advisers say the placing has been 15 times oversubscribed and that fund managers have found their allocations drastically scaled back. This indicates healthy demand but is also testimony to the kind of marketing drive, both here and in the US, that is normally put behind much larger companies.

On this valuation it is perhaps worthwhile comparing Harvey Nichols with House of Fraser, the department store group which floated two years ago. House of Fraser has 51 department stores and has a market capitalisation of £400m. Harvey Nichols has one and is valued at £148m. Even given the value of the Knightsbridge property, that looks steep.

Harvey Nichols has clearly been a financial success in recent years. A loss of £3.4m on sales of £55m in 1993 has been turned into a profit of £6m on sales of £77m last year. The estimate of this year's figures are for profits of £9m on sales of £90m. In a period when some department store operators have struggled, Harvey Nichols has developed a strong niche in fashion, which has won the loyalty of London shoppers.

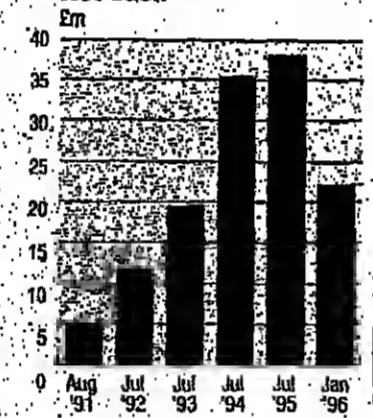
There is also an ambitious £9.5m expansion strategy for the retail business which includes the opening of regional stores, and restaurants.

St Ives: at a glance

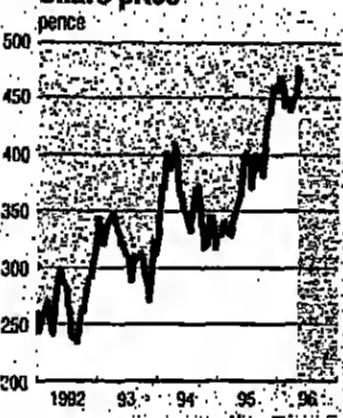
Market value: £470m, share price 489p

Trading record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1996
Turnover (£m)	221	237	264	128	166
Pre-tax profits (£m)	22.1	22.3	35.5	15.7	19.6
Earnings per share (pence)	15.2	13.5	25.4	11.2	13.4
Dividends per share (pence)	5.5	6.4	8.5	2.5	2.9

Net cash



Share price



McCarthy shows 50% profit rise

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

McCarthy & Stone, one of the only retirement home builders to have survived the housing slump, continued its recovery in the six months to February, announcing a 50 per cent jump in profits and promising a drive to increase volumes in the next year.

More unit sales and slightly better margins drove the half-time increase and John McCarthy, chairman, said signs of improvement in the housing market generally made him "cautiously optimistic" about the rest of the year.

McCarthy sold 357 retirement homes in the six-month period, an increase of 12 per cent on last year. That, together with a small increase in return on sales, from 33 per cent to 34 per cent, pushed pre-tax profits up from £1.4m to £2.1m. The company paid its first interim dividend since 1992, a 0.55p payout.

The shares, which have enjoyed a strong run over the past year, closed unchanged at 100p as the market focused on the company's measured comments on trading.

"Whilst recognising the continuing difficulties facing the housebuilding industry, we remain confident for the years ahead," the company said.

Shareholder caution reflects memories of the collapse into the red in the early years of the

1990s when McCarthy made aggregate losses of more than £60m between 1990 and 1993. The shares, which reached 584p in the summer of 1987, fell to a low of 22p at the beginning of 1993.

Average sales prices were more or less unchanged during the half year at £63,400 (£63,000) with the increase in operating margin coming from a reducing land cost. The problems facing the housing market were also underlined by an increase in the number of buyers relying on selling their existing home to McCarthy at a discounted price to enable them to move.

Even more than other housebuilders, McCarthy is dependent on its customers being able to free up the capital tied up in often large family homes to finance the purchase of a retirement flat. Part-exchange deals rose from 44.5 per cent of transactions to 50 per cent, although the company maintained the amount of capital tied up in secondhand properties by selling them on more quickly. The balance sheet remained strong with net cash of £3.6m at the half year.

A big problem facing McCarthy has been the increase in delays in the planning process, with some applications taking more than a year to push through the system. McCarthy has to gain approval for change of use for its mainly town-centre sites.

Paris Club close to deal on Russian debt

Washington - Western creditor countries are close to a final deal on rescheduling Russia's foreign debt, largely borrowed by the former Soviet Union, writes Rupert Corwell.

They also accept that Moscow is pushing through the economic reforms it agreed as the price for a \$10bn (£6.6bn) loan from the International Monetary Fund last month.

Speaking during the IMF and World Bank spring meetings, which concluded in Washington yesterday, Vladimir

Panov, the Russian finance minister, said he had won support from US Treasury secretary Robert Rubin for a long-term rescheduling of the \$45bn owed to the rich nations grouped in the so-called "Paris Club". The Club could give final approval as early as this week.

Remaining obstacles were apparently removed by assurances from Mr Panov and Sergei Dubinin, president of the Russian central bank, over progress of Russia's implementation of the free market reforms. It had been widely feared President Yeltsin would abandon the politically painful plan ahead of elections this summer.

IN BRIEF

• Bristol-Myers Squibb, the US drug giant, announced better than expected first-quarter earnings, boosted by strong sales of its cholesterol-lowering and cancer drugs. The New York-based group said net income rose to \$726m (£481m), or \$1.44 a share, from \$657m, or \$1.29, the previous year. Turnover was 11 per cent ahead at \$3.67bn. Sales of Pravachol, Bristol-Myers' cholesterol-lowering drug, rose 47 per cent to \$255m, while sales of Taxol, a cancer drug, rose 59 per cent to \$200m. Sales of Capoten, a drug used to lower high blood pressure, fell 15 per cent after the patent on the compound expired in February.

• Colin Malby, chairman of Kleinwort Benson Investment Trust since 1992, is retiring from the board. David Acland, a director, will succeed him. Peter Ellis, a director of Kleinwort Benson Investment Management will also be joining the investment trust as a director.

• Aim-listed healthcare-products distributor VDC said the balance of its shares not taken up under its recent 32.4 million rights issue have been placed with broker Beeson Gregory at a price of 170p per share. Almost 700,000 shares had not been taken up. The company said on Monday that 51 per cent of its one-for-five rights issue had been taken up at 675p per share.

• Stordata Solutions, which changed its name from Millgate last year and moved into car security and computer systems, issued a profits warning yesterday saying it was unlikely to meet market expectations. Chairman Duncan Clegg told shareholders at the company's AGM that despite a healthy performance from the Primary Distribution data storage company and efficiency gains at the Laserline security systems business, the group was unlikely to meet forecasts.

• Monarch Resources, the mining group, plunged to a \$37.8m loss in the year to December, reversing a profit of \$409,000 last time. The deficit came despite net revenues which climbed from \$15.8m to \$25.5m last year. The company said the principal focus of this year's exploration programme will be on exploring its large and highly prospective concession in Mexico and adding to these holdings. These have increased to approximately 120,000 hectares, after the company staked two additional concessions, Saladillo 3 and Reino Unido.

• 600 Group, the engineering company, said it expects profits for its 1996 financial year to be about £9.5m, well above the current market consensus of £7.9m. The company said the expected increase reflected March sales significantly ahead of budgets, leading to improved margins for the year as a whole. The profits estimate excludes a pension credit of about £3.4m.

• Enamex, the quarrying group, has again lambasted Redland's 35p-a-share offer, calling the approach "ill-conceived, misinformed and misdirected". The group advised its shareholders and said that none of its directors, who speak for 27 per cent of the company, intended to accept the offer.

• Transatlantic Holdings announced at yesterday's annual meeting that it is to change its name to Liberty International. South African insurer Liberty Life owns two thirds of the shares. It is hoped the new name will help promote the company as the international arm of the £5bn South African group.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Alexander Workman (F)	65.3m (51.8m)	5.2m (4.3m)	10.3p (8.4p)	6.5p (6p)
Consett (F)	36.1m (33.4m)	1.11m (0.83m)	6.18p (4.48p)	3.5p (3.25p)
James Watson (F)	17.2m (14.0m)	0.99m (0.83m)	8.34p (6.95p)	2.2p (2p)
TJ Hughes (F)	60.9m (48.6m)	0.92m (1.63m)	3.2p (5.43p)	2.65p (2.65p)
Huntleigh Technology (F)	91.0m (70.1m)	12.9m (6.68m)	29.93p (11.45p)	8p (6p)
McCarthy & Stone (F)	24.2m (23.1m)	2.1m (1.4m)	0.3p (0.4p)	0.55p (p)
Sears (F)	2.92m (1.94m)	-12m (154m)	-7.1p (7.5p)	3.95p (3.95p)
Shawcross (F)	11.5m (8.4m)	0.65m (0.53m)	6.8p (8.1p)	4.2p (4.7p)
St Ives (F)	166m (128m)	19.6m (15.7m)	13.37p (11.6p)	2.9p (2.5p)

(F) - Forecast (A) - actual (M) - 12 months

When the boss's son is a Brando lookalike

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

There are certainly perks to be had when you're the boss's son. Howard Hodgson, the long-haired former funeral director and Aston Villa fan who runs Ronson, the lighter company, has a son working for him - called Howard Hodgson. Although they sound the same, Hodgson junior goes in for short-haired, brooding Brando-like machismo as shown by the photo from Ronson's current ad campaign. At 22, Howard Junior is international sales manager for Ronson, and looked just the type to spearhead its drive for younger customers, according to Hodgson Senior. After all, says the chief executive, "he's a good deal better looking than I am".

A sour broker's joke doing the rounds yesterday on Sears' (owner of Selfridges) less than sparkling figures. An anagram of chief executive Liam Strong: "Lost Margin". Ouch.

While shadow chancellor Gordon Brown was lambasting Britain's top accountancy firms for supposedly "peddling lies" over Labour's tax policies yesterday, there must have been several in his audience squirming. Attending the London conference "Business and Labour" to hear Mr Brown and others were at least four people from the vilified firms. Although no firms were named, Michael Fowle, senior partner of KPMG's London and South Eastern Region, must have been more irritated than most. A hullabaloo recently blew up over KPMG's 50 tax seminars across the country to advise on what to do if Labour gets in. Other

Miles Emley, chairman of St Ives, the printing company, observed yesterday that "the collapse of Barings had its right side for us. We printed two books on the subject. Every disaster has its silver lining". St Ives also managed to print last year a biography of the Queen, an Oasis album cover, something called Rock'n'Roll for Penguin, Time Turner's "Wildest Dreams" album and two Beatles anthologies. The busy chaps also managed to print the documents for the merger between Lloyds and TSB and all the copies of *Loaded* magazine. Is there a connection here?



Wild one: Howard Jr in a drive for younger customers

high-powered bean counters present were from Coopers & Lybrand, Arthur Andersen and BDO Stoy Hayward.

More squirming at "Business and Labour". At one point Ed Balls, economic adviser to Gordon Brown, was due to chat to Dr Laura D'Andrea Tyson, national economic adviser to President Clinton, via a TV satellite link. The link, supplied by BT, failed to connect for six minutes, during which time Balls waited on brilliantly. Finally Balls had to admit: "Now I know what it feels like to be Terry Wogan waiting for the link to Luxembourg."

Thomas Teichman announced yesterday that he

will step down as executive director of M&S, the over-hyped on-line information company, in order to launch his own corporate finance boutique. Teichman helped Dan Wagner to launch M&S in 1985 after he had spent 20 years in investment banking, with the likes of Bankers Trust and Credit Suisse First Boston. Teichman's new firm, NewMedia Investors, will specialise in giving advice to on-line-type companies, "Internet companies and that kind of thing," according to a spokesman. The first client will be M&S itself. The firm will limit its advice to six clients at a time to maintain quality - "Tom's 6 Max rule," it says here.

We neglected to say yesterday that Darren Higgins, who ran the London Marathon dressed as Wonder Woman, ran the course in an impressive three hours and 40 minutes. Darren, of Ennst & Young, also wanted to point out that "the tightie and black wig were hired for the occasion". Of course, Darren,

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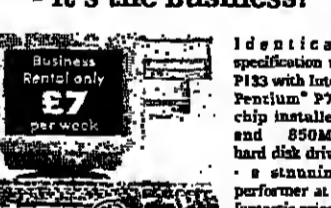
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sport

Lost on the dark side of the Olympic moon

Two years ago, the fat lady cleared her throat but didn't sing. Two weeks ago, I finished second in the Olympic swimming trials, outside the qualifying time for Atlanta and a whole choir of fat ladies broke into a deafening Hallelujah Chorus.

So ended eight years of international competition that began at the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988. The Olympic trials that year were staged in Leeds where, to everyone's amazement, I beat Adrian Moorhouse before he went on to win the Olympic gold medal in Seoul two months later. My career would include two Commonwealth Games, a World Championships, a Commonwealth silver medal from the 1990 Games and a British and Commonwealth record for the 50m breaststroke in 1992. That year I made the qualifying standard for the Barcelona Olympics, but finished third at the trials behind Moorhouse and Nick Gillingham. Unfortunately, as international rules allow only two swimmers per event, I was excluded. Both Adrian and Nick went on to swim in the Olympic final.

The British Olympic Association are anticipating 320 athletes will make the team for Atlanta and much

will be made of how over the moon they all are. Some will then retire. But 300 more have carried the same dreams for the same four years and will not go. Some of these will also retire and very little will be made of the darker side of the Olympic moon.

After a disappointing performance at the 1994 Commonwealth Games, many people told me to quit and that the fat lady was in good voice. If she had been singing, I didn't recognise the tune. But their concerns did not fall on deaf ears and I had to re-evaluate what I was doing and why. I had to consider retirement and to continue. If I was to continue, I had to go back and answer three basic questions for success: Did I have the talent? Did I want to do it? And would my training get me there?

My answers were unequivocal. Certainly I had the talent, strongly believing that the 1988 Olympics had proved my ability. And since a career can often have great highs followed by equally deep lows, I saw the disappointments of '94 as a natural part of a cycle which, as surely as spring follows winter, would be followed by success. By then I had



James Parrack first represented his country in 1988. Two weeks ago he came second in the Atlanta trials, outside the qualifying time, and now the former British record holder realises that his swimming career is over

known the bitter and the sweet taste of each and I was like a junkie craving the high of success. I knew I had more to give and rejected the thought that this was the end. I was still strongly motivated to perform my absolute best on the highest sporting stage in the world. The '96 Atlanta Olympics was less than two years away and that was the only place I wanted to be.

While the successes had fuelled my desire, the disappointments had forced a more mature perspective on exactly how to achieve it. To counter the depressing and austere routine of long, hard hours in the pool, I secured a part-time job with Yorkshire Water, timetabled around my training and competitions. As an athlete who knows his sport, I had confidence in the training programme and in my own ideas on those factors which influenced success outside the pool. Furthermore,

the male sportsman will rise to a physiological peak in his late twenties, and at 27 I was clearly not too old. I just wasn't ready to give up everything I'd dreamed of, hoped for and trained for. Swimming underpinned everything I did; every early night, every time I stayed relatively sober at weekends and every well-balanced high-carbohydrate meal I ate. Without this anchored, goal-orientated life, what would I be left with? I was not ready to walk away from my dreams and retire into an unfamiliar scene. They say the great targets too high and miss, but to set them too low and hit. I still had some arrows left to shoot.

Having addressed my concerns and been given a green light, I mirrored, signalled and manoeuvred myself back into the transatlantic motorway traffic heading for Atlanta. The reasons for success would be ob-

vious and failure would be devoid of the destructive "what if" or "if only" which one can regret forever.

The careers of great performers appear to have all the ups and downs of a calm day on the Med. Those of many breaststroke swimmers can resemble the choppy waters of the Atlantic and mine seem to be the stuff of surfing legend off Hawaii—some huge highs, many more equally frightening lows. I have always preferred the poetry of the melancholic's dream—on one occasion, just once, I wanted to be the best in the world. In 1990, I climbed enough to touch it. But just as Salieri was gifted enough to be tortured by the effortless genius of Mozart, so sports people eat a lot of bananas and on my next step I slipped on a discarded banana skin and suddenly the scene had changed.

I felt I had assembled the necessary climbing gear and I prepared a full-scale assault on the mountain of my own ambition. I didn't know that I would have spent six years trying to re-climb the elusive summit of 1990 and never quite make it. Back then I was securely roped to Moorhouse and simply followed him up. He had been an outstanding guide and inspiration to me, offering help and advice along the way and it all seemed so simple.

Adrian retired in 1992 and when I tried to find my own path to the summit, I got lost in the fog. Wandering in circles, I could remember the view, but not the way up. Finally, there comes a time when you have to let go and call off the search. But you have to go on too long to know that there is no more; to be certain of one's own peace of mind, rather than to live the rest of your life wondering "what if".

And now with the 1996 Olympic trials over, my arrows are all gone. It was depressing to hear such an uplifting rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus at the end of the race; to have come to the end of the road and be forced to accept there is no "Big One", that the glory days between '88-'92 are all there was; that

I'm just not as good as I hoped I was going to be, and that, crushing though it is, I probably won't ever make the transition from being a question on *A Question of Sport* to answering the question on *A Question of Sport*.

As I grieve the passing of an enormous part of my life, the sportsman formerly known as "That Swimmer" can also look forward with confidence. The lessons I have learned in swimming are relevant to any career. To be a strongly motivated, goal orientated and highly disciplined individual, with a clear understanding of "what it takes" will be a significant advantage to my future.

It is ironic that in the 1996 trials, I swam 0.02sec second slower than I did at the trials in 1988, with a complete roller-coaster cycle of highs and lows in between. Even though the best bit was at the beginning, it has been a thrilling ride.

The Olympic dream: You train as hard as you possibly can for four years and sometimes the dream comes true. I grew up as an ordinary kid in an ordinary school in an ordinary town with an ordinary swimming club. At 18, I arrived in Leeds and put in that little extra to have an extraordinary career. But you can't throw a six if you don't pick up the dice.

CHALLENGE CUP COUNTDOWN: Saturday's final marks a watershed in the game's history, says Dave Hadfield

The Cup is dead, long live the Cup



This Saturday at Wembley, you can take your pick, not just between Bradford Bulls and St Helens, but also between two ways of looking at this year's Silk Cup Challenge Cup final.

Depending on your angle, this is either the first Wembley of an exciting new era, or a wake for a special event that will be special no more.

In one sense, the old magic has already gone. The Challenge Cup final as the climax of the season is a thing of the past, because, while it occupies the same place in the calendar, it comes early in the new summer campaign, rather than at the end of the traditional winter season.

This year's competition, despite being largely played in the hiatus between two league seasons, has maintained its shape and momentum. Indeed, the profile of the Cup has benefited from having February and March to itself, not to mention the freshness that comes from the absence, after eight years, of Wigan.

Wembley will be full, or very close to it, on Saturday. For all the feverish promotion of Super League, the Cup—and particularly the Wembley final—retains its grip on the imagination.

This was not always the case. The radical decision to take the final to London in 1929 was bitterly opposed in some quarters. Albert Rosenfeld, one of the game's greatest wingers and still the record try-scorer in a season, was typical of many who thought it an affront and never went to a final again.

But the magic of the Cup, the 40,000 mark and for one year—1932—the final went back north to Wigan.

It was the post-war crowd boom that carried Wembley onwards and upwards, with the Bradford-Halifax final of 1949 filling the stadium for the first time. The crowd limit was set at a slightly lower level than for the football final on the principle that, man for man, rugby league followers were bulkier.

The post-war boom was also notable for the drawn final in 1954 and the world record crowd—officially 102,569, unofficially a lot more than that at Olds,



Dewsbury, in the striped shirts, take on Wigan in the 1929 Challenge Cup final, the first to be staged at Wembley

Photograph: Hulton Deutsch

home of this year's finalists. Bradford, for the replay between Warrington and Halifax. By this stage, the Challenge Cup final was massively out-drawing any other rugby league match and had become not just an occasion for fans of the two finalists, but a rallying point for the game's devotees from all over its heartland.

National television and a game like the 1965 final between Wigan and Hunslet, then

hailed as the best ever, raised the profile of the event still further, to the extent that it was asked whether it was really healthy for it to take such priority over all other competitions.

They were hardly concerned about such niceties in 1971, however, when Leigh became the most surprising winners in Cup history, beating the un-hackable favourites, Leeds, in a final during which Syd Hynes became the first player to be sent off at Wembley.

Folklore has it that his "victim", the endlessly wily Alex Murphy, walked off the crowd as he was carried off on a stretcher. Whatever the truth of that, Murphy was fully recovered in time to receive the Cup from Reginald Maulding.

Although Hynes was the first to walk off Wembley alone, the stadium had claimed a human

sacrifice three years earlier, when Don Fox, who had already won the Lance Todd Trophy as the final's best player, missed the simplest of conversions that would have given Wakefield Trinity victory over Leeds.

It was known as the Watersplash final, but is remembered for Fox's desolation (it took him years to get over it), Eddie Waring's unusually spare and eloquent "Poor lad", and the inane questioning of the suffering kicker by a youthful David Coleman.

The Eighties will be remembered for the 1985 final between Wigan and Hull, beyond any question the finest and most gripping. The after-match moment of communion between the Parramatta and Australia team-mates, Brett Kenny and Peter Sterling, is my own most evocative Wembley memory. The sublime, effortless run-

ning of Kenny for victorious Wigan had brought him the Lance Todd; the exhausted Sterling had, if anything, played even better in a losing cause.

Three years later, Wigan embarked on a domination of the code's big day that continued until this year and their defeat in the fifth round at Salford. After their recent monopoly, their absence this time reinvigorates the occasion. It will be quite like old times to go down Wembley Way not knowing who is going to win.

But what of the future? Wembley is an overpriced, inadequate stadium, but the weekend in London is the pivotal one of the rugby league season. Can it remain such under the blueprint that is in place for succeeding seasons? Much like the Government with the National Health Service, the Rugby League declares "the

Cup is safe with us" without any one really believing them.

Their mistake at headquarters is to imagine that the important thing is the month of the year in which the final is played. A final in April or May, two months into a summer season with previous rounds played as a pre-season pipe-opener based on groups, will be a betrayal of all that is good in the Cup's traditions.

Leaving windows in the Super League programme for a clean, straight knockout leading to a final in, say, August, would maintain those traditions, as well as extending a season which is now too short.

Teams which have lost four Super League matches this time have, in essence, seen their seasons end after a month. They cannot even say, in time-honoured fashion: "Ah well, there's always the Cup."

Bulls pick Hamer for Wembley

The veteran prop Jon Hamer is the surprise selection in Bradford Bulls' Wembley line-up, writes Dave Hadfield.

The 30-year-old, largely absent from the first team this year because of his work as a policeman, has got the vote ahead of Karl Fairbank in the starting side in Saturday's Challenge Cup final. Nathan Graham, signed from Dewsbury in November, will play full-back and Bernard Dwyer is at hooker.

The first player to score a hat-trick in the final will win £10,000, the code's largest individual prize for what would be the first in a Wembley final.

Oldham's Jason Tenu and Scott Ransom are to appear at a disciplinary meeting tomorrow over incidents in which Lee Harland and Nathan Sykes were injured during the match at Castleford last Saturday. Castleford's Geoff Alderson was sent off for a high tackle in injury time, but their coach, John Joyner, complained that opposing players had got away with worse.

Leeds have signed the Tongan rugby union international Seta Tuipuloto. The 24-year-old wing or centre has played in 10 Tests for Tonga, including last year's rugby union World Cup.

Sheffield Eagles have enlisted the Australian centre Danny Grimley, who has played for Parramatta and the Brisbane club Wynnum-Manly. Grimley was due to play for the new Super League club Adelaide Rams this season, but that competition was blocked by the courts in Australia.

Second Division Leigh have sacked their coach, the former Wigan and Great Britain forward Ian Lucas, and were moving quickly last night to replace him with Eric Hughes, who lost his job at St Helens in February. Bradford Bulls (vs St Helens), Challenge Cup final, Wembley, Saturday; Dewsbury, Castleford, Saturday; Salford, Wigan, Saturday; Huddersfield, Wakefield, Saturday; Leeds, Hull, Saturday; Oldham, Wigan, Saturday; Warrington, Halifax, Saturday; Wigan, Hull, Saturday; Wigan, Hull, Saturday; Wigan, Hull, Saturday.

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Fluent Astle delays inevitable defeat

Cricket

TONY COZIER
reports from Bridgetown
Barbados
New Zealand 195 and 305
West Indies 472 and 29-0
(West Indies win by 10 wickets)

They did not have the ultimate satisfaction of an innings victory but the West Indies yesterday completed their triumph in the first Test against New Zealand emphatically enough in mid-afternoon of the fourth day.

They were held up for an hour at the beginning by the contrasting overnight pair, Nathan Astle and the dogged left-hander Justin Vaughan, and at the end by a carefree last-wicket stand between the fast bowlers Danny Morrison and Robert Kennedy that obliged them to bat again.

Astle, a forthright right-hander from Auckland previously rated only as a one-day specialist, was on 82 at the beginning and continued as he had left off on Sunday afternoon, thumping anything loose from the West Indies fast quartet with a free flow of his confident bat. He and Vaughan carried their partnership to 144, a New Zealand record for the fifth wicket in Tests against the West Indies, before Bishop produced a good one to have Vaughan leg before. The left-hander's 24 had lasted

two and three quarter hours and he did not venture any stroke aggressive enough for a boundary.

In exciting contrast Astle duly went past his maiden hundred in only his third Test and when he was finally taken at second slip diving at the newest of the West Indian fast men, Patterson Thompson, for 125 he had hit two sixes and 22 fours, a remarkable percentage of boundaries.

The New Zealanders then quickly subsided with Bishop and captain Courtney Walsh chipping away at their lower order. Their innings win appeared certain when Kennedy joined Morrison, whose 23 ducks in Test cricket is a reasonable reflection of his batting ability. Young Kennedy hammered his first ball to mid-off for four, Morrison chose to follow his example and they rattled up 45 in just over half an hour until Walsh had Kennedy taken at short leg. His four wickets for 72 carried his tally to 307 in Tests, level with Freddie Trueman's mark and only two short of Lance Gibbs, the second highest West Indian wicket-taker.

While a group of New Zealanders performed their version of the Haka on the boundary's edge, Sherwin Campbell indulged in the batting bacchanal that he had not allowed himself in his marathon 208 in the first innings. He made all the runs on his own, crushing six boundaries, three in succession to formalise the result.

India drop Kamli for England tour

India have dropped batsman Vinod Kamli for this summer's tour of England, apparently for disciplinary reasons.

Kamli, 24, who has scored 1,084 runs in 17 Tests at an average of 54.20, is replaced by the 23-year-old Saurav Ganguly, who has played one-day international cricket but no Tests.

The uncapped medium-fast bowler Paras Mhambrey and left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi are also included in the 16-man squad captained by Mohammed Azharuddin, to play three Tests and three Test Twenty games.

The squad arrive on 30 April. Kamli made his Test debut against England in 1993, when Graham Gooch's touring side lost the three-match series 3-0, and scored 224 in the third Test in Bombay.

Gundappa Viswanath, the chief selector, said Kamli, who is third in the *Wisden Cricket Monthly* world rankings, was not considered for selection, but would not say why.

However, the former Indian captain Dilip Vengsarkar wrote in the *Asian Age* newspaper yesterday that he believed Kamli "was dropped for reasons other than cricket". He suggested the reason was disciplinary as he had urged the selectors to include Kamli in the squad for England.

Agassi upstaged by performing Seal

Tennis

JOHN ROBERTS
reports from Monte Carlo

It seemed apposite that the pop star Seal should top the bill at the ATP tour awards gala here last night, given his success with the *Batman Forever* soundtrack plus the fact that it was an ideal day for performing seals.

Steady rain caused lengthy delays at the Monte Carlo Open. Andre Agassi being among the frustrated competitors as he endeavoured to win his first match in three visits to the tournament. Agassi was on and off the Centre Court three times before defeating the Dutch left-hander Jan Siemerink 6-2, 6-3, after 62 minutes.

The Las Vegas won the first set after 35 minutes, then play was interrupted by Siemerink leading 3-1 in the second set. It resumed for five minutes more—just enough time for Agassi to retake the lead 3-2—before the players adjourned to the locker-room again.

Although Agassi had controlled most of the points, he did not take anything for granted, remembering his three-set defeats here against Austria's Horst Skoff in 1991 and the Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov in 1994.

There was no blip by the American on this occasion. Although Siemerink saved three break points in the seventh game,

he lost his nerve under pressure in the ninth, double-faulting on the second match point.

The weather did not hinder those scheduled for No 2 Court, which is blessed with a folding roof. Bohdan Ulihrach, a promising young Czech, took advantage of the amenity to record a 6-4, 6-2 win against Sweden's Magnus Larsson, and Sergi Bruguera began to resemble the player every opponent used to fear on the clay courts in defeating Andrea Gaudenzi, 6-2, 7-6.

Last week, Bruguera lost to Larsson in three sets in the third round of his home tournament in Barcelona, and a year ago the Spaniard was defeated by Gaudenzi here in straight sets in the quarter-finals.

That result was typical of Bruguera's fortunes last year, when the winner of the French Open back-to-back in 1993 and 1994, following two victories in Monte Carlo, struggled to overcome injury problems.

"When you don't play it's very difficult," Bruguera said. "You can practise a lot, but you're out of the competition. When you are out for a long time, maybe you relax and have an easy life and you have to recover the hunger to win. I had a very bad year, and I still feel that I'm not moving as well as before, but now I'm hungry to win something." Results, *Sporting Digest*, page 27

Scots seek forward momentum

Football

PHIL SHAW
reports from Copenhagen

With barely six weeks to go before the European Championship finals, Scotland face a friendly in a friendly here this evening, anxious to establish a credible attacking partnership and to maintain their defensive solidity in the face of enforced changes.

Craig Brown has long hankered after the... of striking duo formed by Ally McCoist and Mo Johnston during the Andy Roxburgh era. Like a hyphenated card dealer, the Scottish manager has shuffled a pack which has variously included McCoist, Duncan Shearer, Andy Walker, Scott Booth, Darren Ferguson, Eoin Jess, Darren Jackson and John McGinlay. In the Parken Stadium, the onus will be on John Spence and Kevin Gallacher to prove that they are a winning hand.

Brown's search for a forward with pace who can play through the middle off the last defender has belatedly led him back to Gallacher, who has spent much of the season on the treatment table or the substitutes' bench after twice breaking a leg with Blackburn. As a winger in a previous incarnation with Dundee United and Coventry, Gallacher also offers Scotland the option of width.

The diminutive Spencer is likely to play slightly deeper, in the role he reluctantly fills for Chelsea. He has yet to score in six appearances for Scotland, whereas Gallacher boasts just two goals in the course of 20 caps spread over eight years. The only time they have been on the pitch together was the second half of last month's 1-0 victory over Australia, but with Ferguson out of the tournament and Booth doubtful, it is a case of needs must.

During a 10-match qualifying campaign in which they conceded only three goals, Scotland developed a redoubtable three-

man defensive unit in front of Jim Leighton. Now, injuries to Alan McLaren (knee) and Colin Calderwood (medial ligament) have disrupted their plans, with the Rangers player in particular facing a race against time to make the finals. Should the Scots elect to persevere with wing-backs and three defenders against the Danes, the likelihood is that Colin Hendry will be joined by Tom Boyd and Stewart McKimmie, the latter possibly operating as sweeper. Alternatively, if he judges that the European champions might go for three attackers, Brown may favour a conventional 4-4-2 formation.

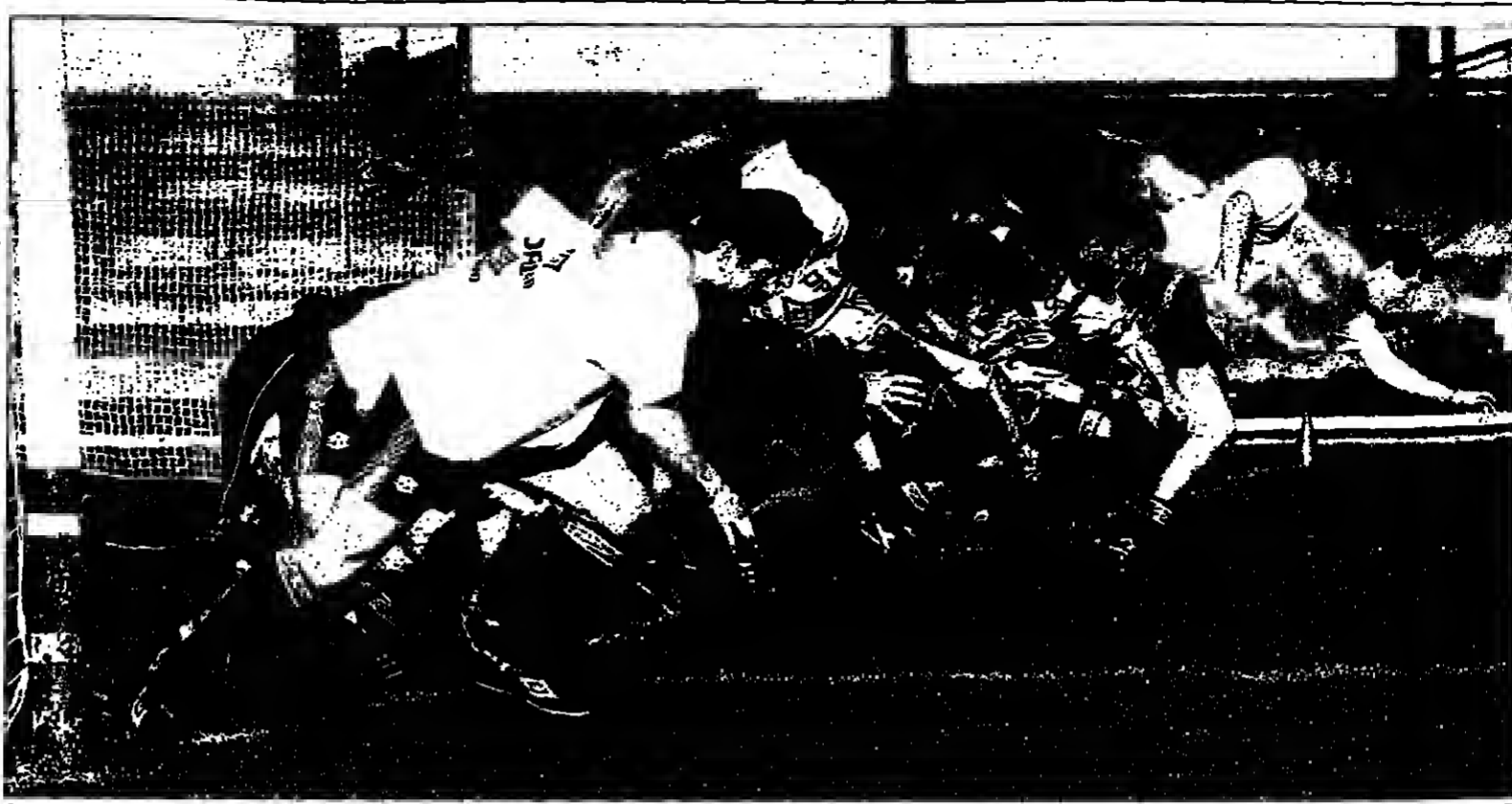
"We've got to be adaptable," he said. "Playing three defenders has served us well, but Denmark are as near to the Netherlands as we'll get, and when we play the Dutch in the finals they'll have three up. You can't comfortably play a three-man defence against that."

While Brown is committed to giving half a game each to Leighton and Andy Goram, thus reflecting another area of uncertainty, Peter Schmeichel is expected to keep goal for a near-final strength Denmark side. The Laudrup brothers, the Japan-bound Michael, and Brian of Rangers, are in line to win their 87th and 62nd caps respectively.

The Scottish management remain unimpressed by suggestions that the Danes are weaker than when they won the trophy in 1992. Brown pointed out that Michael Laudrup missed their "wild card" triumph because of a feud with the coach, Richard Moller Nielsen, and believes they could do well in England.

"The Laudrups will be catered for," he said, as if arranging an underdog contract. "We're relishing the challenge - it'll be a rehearsal for how to play against excellence tucked in off the front players."

SCOTLAND: Leighton (Hibernian); McMillan (Aberdeen); Hendry (Blackburn); Boyd, McCall (Dundee); Calderwood (Blackburn); Boyd, McCall (Dundee); Calderwood (Blackburn); Boyd, McCall (Dundee); Calderwood (Blackburn).



Clearing off the line: The Republic of Ireland squad run through their paces in training for this afternoon's match in Prague

Photograph: AP

Gould to show his hard side

Bobby Gould criticised himself yesterday and said he was determined to improve on his last managerial performance with Wales. He has the chance to put things right against Switzerland in Lugano tonight in Wales' first game since their 3-0 defeat by Italy in January.

"I was too soft on the players. I felt sorry for them because of the hard time they had had with their clubs over Christmas and the new year," Gould said.

Gould has left Ian Rush, Mark Hughes, Ryan Giggs and David Phillips at home, while Switzerland, England's first opponents in Euro 96 in England in June, name six of the side that lost at Wembley in November.

Wales: Coyne (Tranmere), Robinson (Cardiff), Bowen (Wolves), Synnott (Middlesbrough), Coleman (Blackburn), Legg (Birmingham), Jones (Swansea), Jones (Wrexham), Penhale (Sheff Wed), Harrison (Aston Villa), Taylor (Sheff Wed), Subotic (Middlesbrough), Edwards (Swansea), Speed (Leeds), Goss (Wolves), Phillips (Wrexham), Davies (Man Utd), Savage (Gwent).

Babb makes welcome return

Phil Babb, hoping to be picked for an FA Cup final appearance with Liverpool, will win his 20th cap for the Republic of Ireland against the Czech Republic in Prague this afternoon. The centre-half, who will line up alongside Paul McGrath and Kenny Cunningham, is to play his first game since suffering a toe injury in Liverpool's 2-2 draw with Wimbledon last month.

"Roy Evans will be pleased I am playing as he was very anxious I should get a game under my belt as soon as possible," Babb said.

At first the specialist thought I would be out for six weeks, which would have meant my season being over. But now I am back playing for the Republic and am still hopeful of being considered for Wembley."

Mick McCarthy, the Republic manager, has been forced to field an experimental side as many of his first-choice players are out because of injuries and club commitments, while Roy Keane is suspended.

Bafana Bafana face boys from Brazil

South Africa made the most of their home advantage during the first two games of the Nelson Mandela Inauguration Challenge, beating Zambia and drawing with Argentina.

But the squad, affectionately known as Bafana Bafana - Zulu for "our boys" - faces its biggest challenge today against Brazil. "We hope to have a great match and another victory," the Brazilian coach, Mario Zagallo, said as he and his players arrived at Johannesburg airport on Monday.

Two veterans of the 1994 World Cup - central defender Aldair and forward Bebeto - are in the line-up for today's match, along with a whole host of young players from Brazil's Olympic squad. For Brazil, the international friendly in Johannesburg will be a warm-up for Atlanta, and a chance to test Africa's best.

The South African coach, Clive Barker, meanwhile, was having personnel problems. A knee injury has kept out the

Gillespie doubtful for return at Leeds

Keith Gillespie's hopes of re-joining Newcastle's push for the Premiership title at Leeds on Monday have suffered another setback. The Northern Ireland international winger, who was due to resume full training today after an ankle injury, has been picked up tonsillitis and is doubtful for the game at Elland Road.

The Newcastle physiotherapist, Derek Wright, said: "He will have to stay indoors for a few days on antibiotics and then we'll monitor the situation. It's a shame because Keith was ready to step up his training."

Steve Bruce, the Manchester United captain, who will miss Sunday's game against Nottingham Forest with a hamstring injury, is optimistic about being fit for the last Premiership game of the season at Middlesbrough and the FA Cup final a week later. "The last time I suffered a hamstring injury like this was at Christmas and I was back in a fortnight," he said.

Stoke's £800,000-rated Icelandic centre-half Lars Sigurdsson is wanted by the Premiership newcomers Sunderland, while the Watford keeper Kevin Miller is a target for Southampton as they look for a replacement for Dave Beasant and Bruce Grobbelaar. The 41m-rated Miller, who is tipped as a future England keeper, is also interesting Celtic.

Wimbledon's owner, Sam Hammam, is still pursuing plans to move his club to Dublin. Hammam has been in the Irish capital for talks with Paul McGuinness, the manager of the rock band U2. Talks are also reported to have been held with property developer about proposals to build a £75m, 40,000-capacity stadium near Dublin.

The Dons, who lodge at Selhurst Park, the home of Crystal Palace, are adamant they must move to survive in the Premiership, but the switch to Ireland is opposed by the Irish FA and Wimbledon supporters.

Davis is feeling on top of the world

Snooker

It was only the first round, but to Steve Davis it felt like winning the Embassy world title itself after he battled back to beat Willie Thorne at The Crucible in the early hours of yesterday morning.

Davis crept into the second round with a dramatic 10-8 success, after trailing 8-5, with a vintage display of cue-manship that revived memories of the evenings when he dominated the championship in Sheffield.

"I just tried to remember how I used to do it in the old days," said the 38-year-old world No 2, who has slipped to 10th on the provisional rankings after one of his worst seasons.

"Who knows what might happen as the tournament unfolds. But this result has restored belief in myself under the spotlight," he added when asked if he could win a seventh world title this time.

It might seem a small success in terms of his career but what it meant to Davis was evident in his salute to the audience after rolling in the final black of a 31 clearance to complete his triumph with a shot that brought a whoop of delight from his wife, Judy, who was watching on television backstage.

This eight-hour slog concluded at 20 minutes after midnight after an ultra-cautious opening session, which had run out of time one frame short of schedule. "Steve didn't win it, I lost it," Thorne said. "I feel like retiring but I won't. I know I'm playing well but I've lost the ability to win."

Alan McManus beat Mick Price 10-5 yesterday afternoon, but the scoreline flattered the 25-year-old Scotsman. McManus eventually rediscovered his touch in the day's second session, winning seven frames in a row. The bespectacled Price, from Nuneaton had locked on course for a surprise success, but scored only 45 points in the closing stages as his challenge collapsed.

(Sheffield First round: S Davis (Eng) 10-8 W Thorne (Eng) 10-8; A McManus (Scot) 10-5 M Price (Eng) 10-5.)

TODAY'S NUMBER

2

The boxers Great Britain will have at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. The Liverpool featherweight David Burke has been joined by the London heavyweight Fola Oskola following the withdrawal of a Danish fighter.

Hamilton forced to experiment

Bryan Hamilton, the Northern Ireland manager, may include four untested players against Sweden in today's friendly at Windsor Park, Belfast.

The Bolton goalkeeper Aidan Davison, the 18-year-old St Johnstone centre-half Danny Griffin, and wingers Jon McCarthy, of Port Vale, and James

Quinn of Blackpool are set to take their international bows after several withdrawals from the squad. Injury has ruled out Keith Gillespie, Phil Gray, Neil Lennon and Alan Pettis, while the striker Iain Dowie is serving a one-match suspension.

Davison will take over from Fettes, Griffin is expected to be

at right-back allowing Steve Lomas of Manchester City to switch into midfield. Sweden's experienced squad includes the former Arsenal midfielder Stefan Schwarz, Everton's Anders Limpar and goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli, who taken part in the last two World Cup finals.

Simpson brings inspiration

Hockey

Rhona Simpson, the Scottish striker, came back from injury to score her 10th goal in 12 games to take Great Britain to a deserved 1-0 win against Spain, the Olympic champions, in Atlanta yesterday, writes Bill Colwill.

The teams had to endure temperatures well into the 80s as they fine-tuned their preparations for this summer's Olympic, and Britain dominated the first half, particularly in the midfield.

The goal came nine minutes from the end following a long corner. Tina Cullen, chipping the ball over a Spanish defender's stick, surprised the defence with a reverse kick centre, and Simpson was on hand to provide the finishing touch.

Britain play the United States today in the second of their three-test series.

GREAT BRITAIN: R Rowe (Sutton); J Adams (Bradford); S Fraser (Gwent); K Brown (Slough); J Cope (Leicester); M Davies (St. Paul); P Richardson (Gwent, capt); C Cook (Highgate); M Nicholas (Slough); R Simpson (Edinburgh); J Cullen (Highgate). Substitutes: K Jones (Middlesbrough); J Miller (Dartford); S Macdonald (Blaugrove Western).

Olazabal withdraws again

Golf

Fears for Jose Maria Olazabal's career increased yesterday when he decided to pull out of yet another tournament, this week's Turespan Masters in Valencia.

The 30-year-old Spaniard has been diagnosed as suffering from rheumatoid arthritis in both his feet and has not played competitively since last September. The next of a long

line of target dates for his return is now the Spanish Open, which begins in Madrid in a fortnight's time.

Olazabal's manager, Sergio Gomez, said: "It was a very close decision this time, but Jose Maria still didn't think he was ready. He was out on the course practising from Monday to Thursday last week, but when the doctors told him down on the anti-inflammatory tablets he has to take, he felt worse."

Merricks able to overcome adversity

Sailing

In a stunning display of sailing John Merricks and Ian Walker, Britain's 470 representatives in the Olympics, overcame all kinds of adversity at the French Olympic Week regatta here yesterday, writes Stuart Alexander from Hyeres.

Kept ashore by high winds and suffering from food poisoning, Merricks was being treated when an afternoon race was called. The boat was sailed to the course by the coach Derek Clark. Merricks, following by fast boat.

They were fourth in the first race despite a bolt on the rudder working loose. Afterwards they lashed the still wobbly rudder together and led the second race from start to finish.

Andy Beadsworth edged closer to the top eight and a place in the Soling match race play-off yesterday. They were recalled for being over the line in the first race, but pulled back to eighth and were sixth in the second race.

Richmond eye England's Catt and Clarke

Rugby Union

Richmond, the Courage Second Division club, are planning a major signing coup, with the England internationals Mike Catt and Ben Clarke top of their list.

The Richmond rugby director, Vinny Cordington, said: "We have been speaking to Mike and Ben, but the discussions are not concluded. However, we intend making a big hit presentation on 7 May."

The date is significant as players' contracts will be officially activated the day before, following the ending of the Rugby Football Union's moratorium on player payments.

Leicester, still with an outside chance of a league and cup double, will be without two key players for tonight's Courage League game with Gloucester at Welford Road. Flanker Neil Back and scrum-half Aadel Kardooni both miss the penultimate game of the season. Kardooni is ruled out with a hamstring strain and Back is rested. Jamie Hamilton replaces Kardooni and Bill Drake-Lee takes over from Back.

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WEEKEND FIXTURES AND POOLS FORECAST

FA Cup/League	
1. Aston Villa v Man City	2
2. Blackburn v Arsenal	3
3. Bolton v Southampton	4
4. QPR v West Ham	5
5. Sheff Wed v Everton	6
6. Tottenham v Chelsea	7
7. Wimbledon v Coventry	8
Also playing (not on computer): Liverpool v Middlesbrough, Reading v Southampton, Leeds v Newcastle.	
English League First Division	
9. Grimsby v Tranmere	10
11. Luton v Barnsley	12
13. Millwall v Stoke	14
15. Norwich v Watford	16
17. Port Vale v Charlton	18
19. Portsmouth v Ipswich	20
21. Reading v Sheff Wed	22
23. Southampton v QPR	24
Also playing (not on computer): Leicester v Birmingham, Sunderland v West Bromwich, Wolverhampton v Huddersfield, Reading v Derby, Derby v Crystal Palace.	
Second Division	
25. Bournemouth v Chesterfield	26
27. Bournemouth v Chesterfield	28
29. Bradford v Brentford (not playing Friday)	30
Scottish League	
31. Celtic v Rangers	32
33. Dundee v Aberdeen	34
35. Dundee v Aberdeen	36
37. Dundee v Aberdeen	38
39. Dundee v Aberdeen	40
41. Dundee v Aberdeen	42
43. Dundee v Aberdeen	44
45. Dundee v Aberdeen	46
47. Dundee v Aberdeen	48
49. Dundee v Aberdeen	50
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67. Dundee v Aberdeen	68
69. Dundee v Aberdeen	70
71. Dundee v Aberdeen	72
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79. Dundee v Aberdeen	80
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89. Dundee v Aberdeen	90
91. Dundee v Aberdeen	92
93. Dundee v Aberdeen	94
95. Dundee v Aberdeen	96
97. Dundee v Aberdeen	98
99. Dundee v Aberdeen	100

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football	
7.30pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	8
8.00pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	9
8.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	10
9.00pm: Liverpool v Manchester United	11
9.30pm: Chelsea v Tottenham	12
10.00pm: Manchester United v Liverpool	13
10.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	14
11.00pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	15
11.30pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	16
12.00pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	17
12.30pm: Liverpool v Manchester United	18
1.00pm: Chelsea v Tottenham	19
1.30pm: Manchester United v Liverpool	20
2.00pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	21
2.30pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	22
3.00pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	23
3.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	24
4.00pm: Liverpool v Manchester United	25
4.30pm: Chelsea v Tottenham	26
5.00pm: Manchester United v Liverpool	27
5.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	28
6.00pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	29
6.30pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	30
7.00pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	31
7.30pm: Liverpool v Manchester United	32
8.00pm: Chelsea v Tottenham	33
8.30pm: Manchester United v Liverpool	34
9.00pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	35
9.30pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	36
10.00pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	37
10.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	38
11.00pm: Liverpool v Manchester United	39
11.30pm: Chelsea v Tottenham	40
12.00pm: Manchester United v Liverpool	41
12.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	42
1.00pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	43
1.30pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	44
2.00pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	45
2.30pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	46
3.00pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	47
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4.00pm: Liverpool v Manchester United	49
4.30pm: Chelsea v Tottenham	50
5.00pm: Manchester United v Liverpool	51
5.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	52
6.00pm: Arsenal v Liverpool	53
6.30pm: Manchester United v Chelsea	54
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5.30pm: Tottenham v Arsenal	100

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England try bold new formation

Real Madrid pay the price of hooliganism

THE IND

Valuations

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Spain's Manuel Diaz Vega will take charge of the European Cup final between Ajax and Juventus in Rome on 22 May. Italy's Pierluigi Pairetto will referee the Cup-Winners' Cup final between Paris Saint-Germain and Rapid Vienna in Brussels on 8 May.

■ Tonnie Bruins Slot, Johan Cruyff's assistant at Barcelona, will move to PSV Eindhoven to run their youth division next season. Bruins Slot, who has spent eight years as assistant to Cruyff at Barcelona, signed a five-year contract with PSV. Before Bruins Slot moved to Barcelona he headed Ajax's youth section.

Venables, who encourages his players to take responsibility rather than look to the bench, added: "I want them to sort things out for themselves."

While Ince will be working out whether to come or go the

Pause for thought: Robbie Fowler (right) prepares with Paul Gascoigne for his full debut for England against Croatia tonight
Photograph: Robert Hallam

tacking partner, Stan Collymore, will probably be named among the substitutes today.

The reshaped team should certainly get a thorough test. Croatia are a good side with several gifted individuals, notably Zvonimir Boban, Alen Boskic and Robert Prosinecki. Just as importantly they will have, in contrast to most friendly opponents, a deep-seated desire to do their reborn country proud. Strong in defence and quick in the counter-attack they are one

of the dark horses for *Euro 96*. With the championships so close the result is not important, the performance is. But, everyone knows a bad defeat would be a serious blow, especially if England are pulled apart defensively. A draw will satisfy Venables, as long as it is well-earned.

GOALIES: Ludic (Croatia Zagreb), Jurevics (Freiburg), Jernai (First Bern), Solman (Dorcy County), Jerkan (First Oostend), Billo (West Ham United), Ansonovics (Hagah Scott), Proskovskii (Barnsley), Kozlov (Scottia), Boban (Maid), Botke (Lazio).

Scots' schedule, page 27

RFU pins its hopes on the broadcasters

A meeting of the Five Nations in Dublin on Saturday, flagged as a deadline by the Scottish RFU vice-president Fred McLeod when the row blew up last week, turns out to be a meeting of European Rugby Cup Ltd, though there is not a great difference between the two. No meeting of the home unions' television advisors is imminent.

Croats on the crest of an emotional wave

Just to hear him reading out the starting line-up would have sent a shiver up Terry Venables' spine. Naturally, they deny that they have emerged as one of the tournament favourites and slaven Bilic, the West Ham defender, duly towed the party line that it was a small, vulnerable squad. But when asked to put his finger on its strengths, he found himself spilt for choice. "Suker is like a goal machine," he said. "Boksic doesn't

Boban's smart three-piece suit amid all the tracksnits was indication that all was still not perfectly well with the Milan midfielder. He will start tonight's match but probably not finish it. Boban has been suffering from mononucleosis — the kissing disease, a strain of glandular fever — for the past 10 months and has not played since facing Juventus in Febru-

Since the Championship qualifiers began Croatia have lost just once in 18 matches. 1-0 away to the Ukraine on a sticky day in June last year. They also lost the services of Tomislav Ivić, one of the most experienced coaches in the world, after a disagreement with Blažević, but quickly put both setbacks behind them. "It's true on our day we can beat any team in the world, but we're not always the sum of the individual parts," Boban says. "He's a charmer, a big motivator," said Bilić of his captain, but Boban has learned to temper his enthusiasm since qualification from Group Four was achieved in November. He extended an invitation to the football-mad President Tudjman to watch Croatia in the final in England. Not the group matches, but the final itself.

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No. 2969, Wednesday 24 April

By Aquila

ACROSS

- 7 Settled one in residence (4)
- 8 Froth on beer, intoxicating, can produce rash (10)
- 10 Most self-satisfied male to propose outside (8)
- 11 Long a feature of Oxford? (6)
- 12 Once a capital yarn (6)
- 13 Federation's mail, say, a problem? (8)
- 15 Prophetic sort, it turns out, in Cromwell's office (13)

- 18 Without a church here in Rome? How revolutionary! (8)
- 20 I say what I say (2,4)
- 22 Riding, hay makes a commotion (6)
- 24 Rash, being dismissed by opening shot (8)
- 25 Kingfisher tickled down under, from the sound of it (10)
- 26 Part of prize achieved individually (4)

DOWN

- 1 Taking to pot, this copper was fired (7,3)
- 2 Barber's work to be done slowly (6)
- 3 One in Oxford, for example, holes out with champagne (8)
- 4 Attack trouble in the wake of a vessel (6)
- 5 Three tablets together for PC 30, suffering? (8)
- 6 Keen to open railway-men's knot (4)
- 9 Opening for people who are not pushy (9,4)
- 14 Weight of an Oscar? (10)
- 16 Fulcrum in row in America (8)
- 17 Watch over volunteers left behind for posting (8)
- 19 Henry could to spill beer, as a result of this? (6)
- 21 The buck stops here — Hastings? (6)
- 23 Reversible deck (4)

Thursday's Solution

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IN BRIEF

Gorbachev's last words
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...Sunday, ...
...Interviews to ...
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Helpline gun arrested
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...the ...
...of the Dunbar ...
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Major win for Arafat
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Day's weather
...bright in southern ...
...areas. Cloudy in ...
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ction ONE

BUSINESS